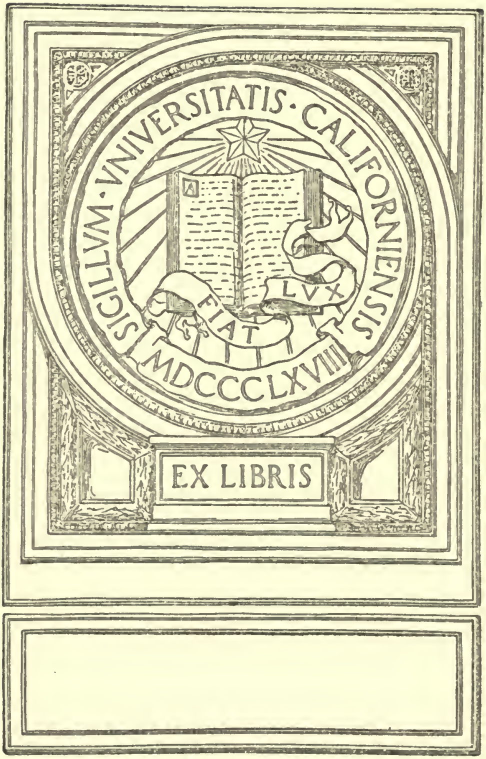
MURVALE EASTMAN

CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST



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MURVALE EASTMAN

CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST

BY

Albion W. Tourgee

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The past offers no parallel; it knew no similar conditions. The conflict between the many and the few has heretofore been one of personal right; the citizen has been evolved from the serf; the freeman from the slave. To this end all the forces of civilization have been shaped. The present is not a question of personal right, but of just opportunity. Wage-earning is not slavery, but when it becomes a fixed condition it is one of sheer dependence. The control of opportunity means the subjection of the individual just as much as did the control of his energies, but it does not trench upon the domain of personal right. No individual laborer has a right to demand work and wages of an individual employer. It is a question between society and the employer as to the control of opportunity.

We have simply come upon a new era. The maxims of the past are no longer safe landmarks. The social bases of the past are too narrow for the demands of the present. The domain of personal duty has been enlarged. The relations of the individual have been extended. The area of mutual obligation has been amazingly increased. The citizen has become responsible for direction as well as allegiance. The function of government has been newly defined. The wisdom of the wisest ancient monarch is folly to-day. It is no longer a defensible theory that "what is good for the hive is good for the bee;" the converse, rather, is the measure of policy. The welfare of the governed is acknowledged to be the supreme function of government. Already the "wealth of nations" has proved a delusion. The individual is the pivot of progress. Personal independence is the test of social forces. A nation may grow rich beyond all precedent, and at the same time individual opportunity be constantly restricted and the area of self-direction and control be rapidly diminished. The man who labors for himself is a master; he who is dependent for opportunity upon another's will is half a slave.

It is against this background of fact that the author has sought to trace certain characters. He claims for his work only that the background is a real one, and the figures such as one meets in real life, shown under familiar conditions. He has not sought to indicate specific methods of amendment or predict particular results, but merely to point out the spirit which must animate and precede any successful effort at amelioration. The general purpose is the most important element of social progress. "Where there is a will, there will always be found a way," is an adage peculiarly true of popular impulses. Method is secondary, and depends largely on the agencies the popular will must employ and the conditions under which it must act. The moral tendency from which amendment must arise is a fact; millennial possibilities and specific remedies are at best but dreams.

"We cannot do without Christianity," said Matthew Arnold, "and we cannot endure it as it is." He uttered half a truth. We have applied the basic principle of Christianity to half the relations of life: the result has been personal liberty—the equal right of every individual to control his own energies. Is the world ready to apply the same immutable principle to another field of human relation—the field of opportunity as well as freedom of endeavor? This is the question formulated in these pages, simply because it is the paramount question which is struggling for answer in these our times—the most real fact of every life.

MAYVILLE, N. Y., *November*, 1890.

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MURVALE EASTMAN.

CHAPTER I.

A CHRONIC GRUMBLER.

"HANNAH!"

It was a man's voice, strong and firm despite the peculiar huskiness which tells of bronchial disease. Though evidently labored, there was nothing weak or querulous about it.

"Yes, dear, in a minute," came the answer from another room.

Presently a door opened and a woman entered, gray-haired but still comely. Her flushed face, sleeves rolled above the elbow, and traces of flour on the plump arms, showed that she had been engaged in some culinary occupation. With housewifely caution she left the door ajar behind her.

"What is it, Jonas?" she asked.

"Hannah, don't you think we might go to the park to-morrow?"

The man who asked the question sat in a big, red, splint-bottomed rocking-chair in the "second-story front" of a story-and-a-half house in one of the poorest quarters of a great city. It would have been called a suburb but that the city stretched away on either side of it, dense and crowded. A valley running down to the river, too broad to be conveniently built over, had been seized upon, before the growth of population too greatly enhanced its value, as a convenient means of ingress by the half-dozen railroads converging in the city. This fact had condemned it to smoke and squalor. The houses built along its sides were small and cheap. It would not pay to erect costly structures in such a locality.

The room was of medium size, and though next to the roof, not uncomfortable nor altogether ill-furnished. That from which the woman came was smaller, but served very well for a kitchen. The entrance was by an outside stairway at the rear. A quilt was thrown over the chair in which the man sat, evidently taken from the bed in the back part of the room. The one window in the front was at his right. Before him was an old-fashioned narrow hair-cloth lounge, much worn; behind him a table. A newspaper, limp and worn from much handling, lay across his lap.

"Go to the park!" repeated the woman in surprise. "Why, Jonas, what *do* you mean?"

She sat down upon the lounge and took up a piece of sewing with that habit of constant occupation which becomes almost a disease in the woman compelled to labor, hardly removing her eyes from her husband's face except to note where first to set her needle.

"Just what I say, Hannah," answered the husband. "You know to-morrow is your birthday, and I thought it might do us both good to get a bit of air with a little less cinder in it than what we have to breathe here."

He glanced at the blackened panes of the one window as he spoke.

"Do you think you could walk as far as that, Jonas?" suggested his wife.

"I suppose not." A spasm interrupted him. He coughed with a sort of angry vehemence, as if protesting against what he could not avoid. His wife kept on sewing. "Not a great way at a time, at least," he added finally, panting as he wiped his stiff mustache.

"It's a long way, as much as three miles," said the wife hopelessly.

"Oh, I don't mean the big park. Of course we couldn't go there. You know that little one up on the avenue, not more'n a mile from here. If we should start early——" He did not finish the sentence but his voice was full of pitiful yearning.

"You mean Garden Square?"

"Yes, next to Kishu's church."

"Perhaps we might go there—if you think you could stand it?"

"We could take our time; 'go early and get good seats,' you know."

"Yes; and it's in the 'dress circle,'" said the woman smiling, "the very swellest part of the city."

"We shouldn't exactly harmonize, you think?"

The woman glanced at her dress. It was of cheap material, faded, patched in places, yet worn with the unmistakable air of gentility.

"Twenty-five years going down hill has been pretty hard on you, dear, but you're a lady yet, as good as any of them," said the husband almost fiercely.

"Oh, I'll go, Jonas," answered the wife in a tone of hasty conciliation. "I was only wondering if I could do anything to freshen this up. You know I like to look respectable."

"Yes, Hannah, I know just how you feel, and I wouldn't ask this, only—well, I've a special reason for wanting to go there, and as soon as I get able to take my 'run' again, there won't be any chance, you know."

"Yes, dear, I do know," said the wife, furtively wiping her eyes, "and—and—the winter's coming on, and you're so fond of trees and flowers. Of course I'll go," she added with a cheerfulness that was evidently forced.

The husband was silent for a little while. The wife looked up, but her eyes dropped on her work as soon as they met his gaze, fixed mournfully upon her. Tears fell on her needle, but she sewed on busily.

"You think it'll be my last chance to see such things, don't you, Hannah?" said the husband tenderly.

She raised her work to bite off the thread. The action partly hid her face. She did not answer.

"Like as not you're right," he continued after a moment. "And I wouldn't mind if it wasn't for you. We've had a hard time, dear. Life hasn't brought us much comfort except what we've got out of our love, and I've thought sometimes that only made it all the harder to bear."

"Oh, don't say that!" exclaimed the wife.

"I am not complaining, Hannah. It's all we've got, and worth more than all we could have, but it does make the load heavier; there's no mistake about that. You'd be willing to die if it would ease my pain; and I'd be happy to swap my expectations of life for an assurance that you'd be comfortable the rest of your days. I don't think I ever wanted to be rich—very rich, I mean, but I did want you to have a good home and ordinary comforts, and never had an idea but I could always provide them for you; but somehow I haven't been able. It's been just one piece of bad luck on top of another, ever since the big crash carried us under nigh twenty years ago. I've managed to keep us in bread, and you've worked it so that we haven't quite got out of clothes, but that's about the tally of the earthly blessings we've enjoyed."

"We ought to be thankful for them," answered the wife, trying to speak cheerfully.

"People have a fashion of saying so, Hannah; but what reason have we for thankfulness at merely being alive, without any hope that things will ever get any better and are reasonably certain to get worse?"

"But *you* have not lost hope?" said the wife meaningly.

"No; I haven't lost hope. I'm one of the kind it's nearly impossible to discourage. I just *can't* give up. Perhaps that's been the trouble with me. Even when the crowd upset the car and spilled me out, I never thought of letting go the lines, though the horses dragged me half a block. I don't know why—I didn't care a fig about the company's property—just habit, I suppose. But then I'm not thankful, either. Now *you have* lost hope; you don't dream of such a thing as being any better off than we are, and fear every day may be worse than the one before. You expect the down grade to keep on getting sharper and harder until the end, and *you* talk about being thankful! I don't see the grounds of it, Hannah. We've done all we could. If I've ever missed a day's work when I could work at all, or you ever let slip a chance to earn and save, I don't know it. And this is what we've got to show for it. Of course we spent something educating the boys, and something hunting for the little one; but that's all. We've never had any luxuries, and a good deal of the time have been short for necessaries. Now, I say it isn't fair. We've deserved better than we've had, measuring our work, our savings, and our good-will with others, and putting what we've had beside what they've enjoyed."

"But if it is the Lord's will——?"

"But it *isn't* the Lord's will. It's blasphemy to hint that the Lord wishes such things to be."

The man spoke with impetuous heat.

"You know you haven't been strong since—since—our trouble, Jonas," said the woman soothingly.

"Very true; but I've done a man's work all the time, Hannah, until just lately. I haven't shirked on that account."

"Well, well, dear, don't blame the Lord, whatever you do. We haven't ever been grumblers: don't let us begin now."

"Oh, I'm not blaming the Lord; only I'm not thankful. I've no cause to be; that's all. I don't think it's the Lord's fault, nor his doings, except in a general way. I *do* think society is wrong. It ought not to let a willing man fall into helpless poverty. There have been a hundred times, since we started down, when a helping hand, or even one little finger, would have set me on my feet and made us comfortable. That's what I find fault with. Society is good enough to them that have nothing. It feeds its paupers, and I suppose feeds them well. *They* ought to be thankful. But we aren't paupers and never will be—never can be. Sometimes, perhaps, the world will learn it's better, and in the long run *cheaper*, to help men who don't want to be paupers, than to let them drag on until they lose hope and are fit only for the poor-house or the prison. Pauperism and crime are like disease: the best way to cure 'em is to prevent 'em—to treat them that's 'exposed' as well as them that's sick, just as they do with small-pox."

There was a knock at the back door. The wife answered it and returned with a brown envelope and a messenger's card. The envelope was addressed to "Jonas Underwood." The man opened it and counted the money it contained.

"Six days' work—nine dollars!" he said, holding the money in one hand and the card in the other. "Full time and no docking for mistakes: that's better'n I'd have done if I'd been able to take my 'run,' I'm afraid. You see, they raised the wages twenty-five cents a day as soon as the strike was 'off.' It isn't so bad now: a man could probably average seven or eight dollars a week. He can live on that, but he can't get much ahead for sickness or old age. Better pay the rent and get some coal, Hannah. If we're dry and warm we can chance the food."

He signed the card and handed it to his wife.

"Now, isn't that something to be thankful for?" she asked almost gayly as she kissed his forehead and went to give the messenger his receipt.

When she returned her husband said: "That's the queerest thing, Hannah, that's ever happened to me, and I've had some strange experiences, too. I can't make out why that man should do the work and send me the money. Of course he's young and strong, and probably has got lots of property, but it's no light job that he's undertaken. He said he'd do it for a month, and I guess he meant it. Strange enough, I haven't any objection to being helped that way. It's the sort of thing I'd be willing to do myself—have done a little of, now and then—though I'd die before I'd accept charity. But I'm not going to tax his kindness to the limit, and mean to take my 'run' Monday or Tuesday if I can."

"Don't think of it, Jonas! You know you're not able," said the wife, dropping her work and clasping her hands pleadingly.

"I know, dear," answered the husband, "that I ain't able to work if I could afford to lie still. But I'm not likely to be much better unless I can get rid of this thing here," touching his right breast with his left hand. "That's all the trouble; and every time I've coughed for the last two or three days, I've thought sure I was going to get it up."

The wife's face assumed at once that look of vacuous assent with which we listen to the fancies of others when we do not wish to contradict, but do not in the least believe.

"This thing here" was no unfamiliar topic to the wife of Jonas Underwood, though always a far from pleasant one. He believed that the cough which had troubled him so long was caused by a foreign substance in one of his lungs. Nobody else thought so. The origin of his belief and its history were both curious and sorrowful. As an act of kindness, while serving as a private soldier, he had taken the place of a friend detailed for picket-duty, without the knowledge of his officers and in violation of military rule. In an attack made during the night, the pickets were driven in, and Underwood shot and taken prisoner. As the man whom he had obliged was afraid to divulge the truth he was reported as "absent without leave." Six months afterward he was exchanged, and being much reduced in flesh and troubled with a cough, was discharged from hospital without returning to his regiment, on account of "pulmonary consumption." The fact of disability was too apparent for the over-worked surgeons to pay much attention to his claim that his illness arose from wounds rather than from hereditary disease. His general health improved after leaving the service, and for some years, except for occasional fits of coughing, he showed no sign of the injury which he had suffered. Then his disability became so apparent that, impelled by dire necessity, he made application for a pension.

Everything was against him; reported "absent without leave;" discharged for "consumption;" no one saw him shot; he had never returned to his regiment! All he had to put against these unfavorable facts was his naked word. It is the policy of our government to esteem every such applicant a knave. So agents, paid by the government, were set on his trail to disprove his allegations. He was examined by the medical board and the unmistakable track of a bullet found on his person, the spot where it had entered and where it had come out. It had struck his breast-bone, followed a rib part way round and passed through the fleshy part of his right arm on its way into space. It was impossible, the surgeons said, that it should have injured the right lung. In support of the assigned cause of discharge, congenital consumption, it was found that his mother's three sisters had all died between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six. The applicant's explanation of this very questionable feature of his physical record, that they were "supposed to have been killed by Indians," was regarded as a shrewd device to baffle investigation, and his reply to an imperative demand for "the address of some one who was present at their death and knew the cause," in which he gave the names of three Indian chiefs who were famous leaders in a border war of half a century ago, was looked upon by the wiseacres of the national bureau of rewards and punishments as a piece of phenomenal effrontery. After several years of investigation his application was denied in language none the mildest, and with an imputation which caused the sensitive and suffering veteran to shrink from all association with his former comrades. "This thing here" had become, therefore, a sore subject in more senses than one. His wife knew that her husband's belief was entirely sincere, but even she had long ago concluded that it was only one of the peculiar hallucinations of the disease from which he suffered. Her husband read this conviction in her face.

"I know you don't believe in it, Hannah," he said, apologetically, "and I suppose it must seem foolish; but I can't help it. I know the thing's there, and I can't get well as long as it stays. If I don't get rid of it before the cold weather comes on, I'm afraid I'll never do any more work; but I mean to get it up."

The wife understood her husband's character, so she made no reply. His dark face, strong-featured, with heavy brows and beard, short neck and broad shoulders, showed that his was one of those natures which do not easily yield to disease, and never quite succumb to misfortune. He turned and looked out of the window where the sun was lightening into fleecy waves the mingled steam and smoke that rose from the engine of a passing train.

"Sick people always have fancies, don't they, Hannah? My fancy is that if I could get rid of this thing and not have to expose myself during the winter, I might get strong again: not as I once was—that ain't to be expected; but well enough to do regular work of some sort—not too heavy, you know—so that we needn't lack for necessaries and have a few comforts. Now I've got an idea——"

"Please don't get to making any new plans, Jonas," said the wife plaintively. She knew how absorbed he was apt to become in such things in his enforced idleness.

There was a moment's silence.

"I've had a good many, haven't I?" said the man submissively—"a good many that came to naught. I know it, dear. Sometimes it has been my fault and sometimes my misfortune. But should we have been any better off if I had just sat down and taken things as they came? I haven't always got up by climbing, but I've kept myself from sinking down. You've prayed and I've planned; and if neither one has done any good so far as bettering our condition is concerned, I s'pose they've both helped us to hold out and keep on working."

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Jonas, at all," said the wife, sobbingly. "I'm sure we never could have got along if it hadn't been for your planning. I think it quite wonderful, the resources you have shown. As quick as one dependence fails you always have another, so that in spite of all we have never come to real want. But it troubles me to see you making plans that you haven't the strength nor the means to carry out. I know you will be disappointed, and that always makes you worse."

"Well, it *is* hard, of course, to be tied down by weakness and poverty, and see the doors open all around through which, with a little help, one might get on, and not be able to do a thing, and then perhaps months or years afterward see the very thing one has thought out turning a little river of gold into some rich man's pocket. Of course it's my fault. I made a great mistake once through not knowing what couldn't be known. I have had my chance, and I don't know as I ought to complain. I don't mean to, dear. What I mean to say is that planning is just as good as praying: both take the mind off from trouble, and that's all the good either of them do."

"Don't say that, Jonas, don't! You surely believe in God, don't you?" she asked anxiously. Her husband's religious views had troubled her a good deal since his recent injury.

"In God? Yes. Who could help it? But in religion? No. You see, there's a difference. God is a fact; religion a theory. The one is divine; the other human. God is a necessity; religion an inclination. God is a being of law; religion a thing of fashion. God's law is that selfishness shall succeed. This is not unjust; it is simply a misapplication of force on the part of the creature. The man who gives his whole strength to finding out how he can overreach his fellows will naturally succeed in acquiring wealth. It's just the reasonable result of the continued application of force to a single point. One who thinks of others and is anxious not to injure them will naturally lose chances that such a man would take, and so falls behind in the race of life. There's nothing unfair about it. It is just an illustration of the universal law that strength and cunning everywhere prevail. And strength and cunning are merely instruments; whether the results are good or bad depends upon the man who uses them."

"But that is the same thing: God made all these things, didn't he?" asked the wife.

"He made the forces, dear; not the facts. He made men strong and wise that they might help the weak, not that they might kill or starve or oppress them for their own selfish gratification.

"I haven't any quarrel with religion, except as it tends to make the strong stronger and the weak weaker, or palliates the failure of the strong to do right, and magnifies the tendency of the weak to do wrong. The simple truth is that in extolling mercy it has forgotten justice. It preaches kindness, but is careful not to rebuke greed. To the kindly man it is a snare; to the hard one an opportunity. It honors achievement and despises failure. It esteems the strong and pities the weak. It builds churches for the rich and chapels for the poor. It gives alms to the helpless and advice to the struggling. But one that is worth saving will die before he will accept alms, and he who is struggling is only made weaker by empty-handed advice.

"In a sense I will admit, Hannah, that religion is a good thing; it enables men and women to endure what they would not otherwise submit to. That is the way it guards the peace of society. It sometimes restrains the strong, no doubt, and always binds the weak and disarms the desperate. It often induces the wrong-doer to adopt more tolerable methods, and always compels the oppressed to take more civilized means of righting their wrongs. In other words, it makes men endure wrong more cheerfully and seek to right it more peaceably. Without its influence the poor would kill the rich who create poverty and grow fat upon want."

"I wish you wouldn't talk so," said the woman with a shudder.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, Hannah; and I don't bear anybody ill-will. It's my misfortune that I did not know these things long ago. It takes a good while to learn as much as one ought to know at the beginning. I ought to have known better, for instance, than to give up my chance of success in business and go into the army. But I wanted to see the Right triumph, and I had that queer notion it seems almost impossible for one who has had a religious training to get rid of, that the Lord will somehow or other look after the man who tries to do right. What I ought to have done, instead of going to be shot at, was to have taken part of my profits, hired a substitute, and let him do my fighting for me. Then I should have been living in a good home up on the Avenue now, and he would have been wheezing and grunting down here on the Flat."

"But you wouldn't have had the sense of duty performed you have now, Jonas," said the wife assuringly, as she started toward the back room to attend to her housekeeping duties. Another fit of coughing attacked the invalid, which was so violent and prolonged that she returned, and in a tone of alarm asked if she could not do something for him. He raised his hand and shook his head. At length the paroxysm passed, and as she wiped the sweat from his forehead she asked anxiously:

"Do you feel worse, dear?"

"Worse!" he exclaimed, catching his breath and pressing a hand to his chest. "No. I'm better'n I've been for years. I tell you I'm going to get that thing up—I *know* I am—came pretty near doing it then—no mistake about it. Being hauled over the pavement by those horses and run over by a carriage is the best thing that's happened to me since that piece of lead made a voyage of discovery into my vitals. I'll get the better of those doctors yet; see if I don't!"

"I declare," said the wife, laughing yet turning away to conceal her tears, "one would think you thought more of coming it over the doctors than anything else."

"Well, Hannah," he gasped, still panting with exertion, but with a gleam of mirth in his eyes, "I sha'n't ever have that 'sense of duty performed' you were speaking of just now until I've showed those three stuffed idiots that I'm neither a fool nor a liar. And I'm going to do it, too."

"God grant that you may!" said the wife in a tone which showed that she had little confidence that her unconscious prayer would be heard.

"I don't think you've got much more confidence in the Lord's doing anything for me than I have, Hannah. As a general thing, you know, I ain't one of the kind he does things for. The men he favors are the ones that take a thing first and pray for it afterward. I don't remember now that there's any really providential *good* come in my way since I gave up my chance in life from a 'sense of duty,' as you say. That's just what it was, too, and it was a direct result of my religious training. It was a foolish notion. The Lord don't change his laws to favor individuals. He couldn't do it. I see it now; then I didn't. The tree not only has to lie as it falls, but fall as it leans, no matter who's under it. All that is done outside of natural laws he does through human instruments. It's my opinion, that's what religion and the church and government and society are chiefly meant for—to equalize the hardship resulting from the operation of natural laws. God means these things to act as buffers to soften the jolts to the weak, and brakes to 'slow up' the strong when they get on too much steam. That's my idea of religion and society. The favor God extends to the good man who runs against these natural laws and gets hurt, is shown only by inclining the hearts of men to sympathy. For the weak, God's providence is always human."

"You do have the queerest notions, Jonas," said the wife, to whom such speculations were evidently not new, and who, despite her inclination to do so, could not altogether deny their force. "Of course we've had hard times, but you cannot deny that the 'strike' was providential for us. After you lost your place as custodian of the bank building, because it distressed the directors so to hear you cough when you went up and down stairs, it did seem as if there was nothing for us but the poorhouse."

"Not so bad as that, Hannah; it can't ever come to that."

"Can't? I'd like to know what there is to hinder it, if your friend gets tired of working for nothing and you don't get better?"

"I wasn't born to be a pauper, Hannah, you ought to know that by this time." The square-cut mustache settled close above the broad chin and a look of dogged resolution came into the man's face. "One can't always help being buried as a pauper, but there isn't any excuse for living as one."

"But, Jonas, you wouldn't——?" exclaimed the wife, her lips as ashen as the hair above her temples.

"There'll be no paupers of my name," answered the husband significantly.

"Why, Jonas! Jonas! You wouldn't—you couldn't—do that!"

The woman fairly shrieked, not from fear, but in agony at the enormity of the thought her husband's words inspired.

"Do you remember, Hannah," said the man coolly, "how you read to me years ago a story of the mutiny in India, where the soldiers swore to kill the ladies of the garrison before they should be surrendered to the savage enemy? You said it was right—that no man ought to let the woman he'd promised to protect suffer a fate worse than death."

"But that——"

"There ain't anything worse than charity, Hannah," he interrupted gravely. "When one is sick it is no shame: it is simply the debt humanity owes to one whom God or human carelessness or wrong has stricken. But when one having strength and willingness cannot get the chance to earn a living, it is because some class have obtained more than their share of power and privilege, and use it to restrict others' opportunity. Then the pauper becomes a slave, and he who accepts charity a dog. Then it is a man's duty to die!"

"But it would be wicked—how could you think of anything so horrible? One would think you were a heathen, and did not live in a Christian land."

"I don't want to worry you, dear, but do you think your Christianity much better than my heathenism? How long is it since you have been to church, Hannah?"

The man spoke tenderly.

"A good while," the woman answered, looking down and picking a thread from her dress.

"Have you been there once since they moved the church up-town?"

The wife shook her head and began to fold her apron back and forth.

"Now, what was the reason, dear?"

"You know, Jonas: I couldn't go where I'd be looked down on. I owed it to you, if not to myself, not to do that," she answered passionately.

"So you did; but don't you see that what you blame me for thinking of doing had the same motive as what you did? You would rather die than go among those who look down upon you. I would rather kill myself than live as a pauper. I don't know as I *could* hurt you—even to save you from shame. But your Christianity and my heathenism are certainly off the same piece. I suppose both run back to the *Mayflower*, in the root. Sometimes we call it pride and sometimes self-respect. It was not taught us, but unconsciously instilled into our natures. It's a very poor sort of an American who will live in a poor-house, and a very poor sort of a Christian who will worship in a mission church! That's the way we both feel."

"But I can't bear to think that you should ever dream of such a terrible thing. It shows how providential the strike was, anyhow."

"Yes," said the husband with a queer smile, "most people would say that was one of the times that Providence was on my side, because I was ready to drown my conscience and do almost anything for money. I don't know as I would have robbed or committed murder for gain that day, but I suppose I should have been ready to in a little while. The men had 'struck,' you know, for twelve hours for a day's work and a dollar and seventy-five cents for a day's wages. I knew they were right. No man can live in the city and raise a family, tidy and decent, on anything less; and the object of society, the purpose God had in establishing the church and founding governments on earth, I believe, was the welfare of the many, not the gratification of the few. The company said they wouldn't grant the demand, and I went and took one of those men's places, just because I was out of a job and you were out of food. I helped the owners to grind the workers down to dependence and weakness. It was the meanest thing I ever did, Hannah, but as quick as I did it Providence turned on my side, you see. I simply obeyed the natural, universal law of individual desire, and took what I could get without heed for others' rights or needs. I didn't blame the men for what they did to me afterward. I thought while the horses were dragging me round over the cobble-stones, after they had upset the car, that they couldn't serve me any worse than I had served them. But I was taking care of Number One and so Providence was on my side, because 'Providence helps them that help themselves,' if they *are* mean. That is really the lesson of our Christianity: take what you can get so long as the law don't interfere, no matter who's hurt by your taking it. It doesn't mean to encourage evil; its *purpose* is entirely beneficent; but in order to secure the patronage of the strong it has to be a little blind to their foibles. The company finally conceded part of what they knew was only right and they could well afford to allow; but they stuck to us 'scabs' because we'd sold ourselves to help them refuse the whole. That's what men call honor among thieves, you see: they let us keep our places because we had helped them keep what everybody knew they ought to have yielded. That's the reason they let this young fellow take my 'run' as a substitute."

"Well, Jonas, that isn't the reason this man sends you the money every week, is it?"

The wife spoke with an air of triumph now.

"There you've got me, Hannah, I own up. I can't see any possible reason why he should do it, unless it is to help a fellow that needs help. I don't believe he's a detective, and what other reason he can have for mixing up in the matter I can't see. He rode with me every day and sometimes two or three times a day for a week during the hottest of it. We talked the strike over a good many times, and I told him just what I thought about that and some other things, too. I don't know what would have become of me that day they made the raid on my car if it hadn't been for him. He seemed to take as much interest in the affair as anybody, and I think got more of the stones they threw than I did. It was he who stopped the horses, picked me up, and finally lugged me back to the sidewalk and stood by while I had my coughing spell. When it was over I saw he was looking at me pretty serious-like, and being afraid he'd say something soft, which would have been too much for me just then, I said, merely to divert his attention, you know:

"'Well, Mister, what do you think of this?'

"'Cowards!' he said through his teeth. I saw his fists were clenched, and one of them had a cut on the knuckle from which the blood was dripping. I couldn't help laughing, pretty wheezy-like and sort of hystericky too, I suppose, thinking of the fellow he had struck and wondering if he hadn't got the toothache. I knew I was hurt pretty bad and thought it was probably the end of my job, but I wasn't going to show any white feather; so I said, 'Yes, it was cowardly, but it ain't any more'n I deserve.' 'How's that?' he asked; and I said, 'These men were getting just enough to starve comfortably on and wanted a little more. They ought to have had it. I put in and got the place; not because the pay was what it ought to be, or the hours reasonable, but because I hadn't anything to do and no prospect of anything. To keep myself from starvation I helped the company keep up its slaves' hours and starvation wages for others. And this is what I've got for it!'

"The crowd on the sidewalk was mostly strikers and strikers' wives—women are always worse'n men at such times—always egging 'em on. Some of the men cheered at what I said, for they all knew it was true, and one of the 'cops' who was righting up the car, said: 'Well, I vow'—only, you understand, it wasn't 'vow' he said at all, but one must be polite these days if he has to lie to do it—'you're a cool one,' said he, '*if you are a scab!*'

"Then a queer thing happened. The women turned right around as soon as they heard the men speaking well of me and couldn't do too much. One wet her handkerchief at the watering-trough and washed my face, and others brushed the dirt off and sort of righted me up where I was sitting against the telegraph pole. I didn't say much, for I hadn't any breath to spare—seemed as if every one I drew would cut me right in two. Finally one of 'em asked if I wanted anything. It struck me as queer, for I thought everybody could see I wanted about as many things as a man could at one time. I knew what they meant, though, and more for the fun than anything else, I said, 'Is there a minister here?' Then they all drew back and some of them crossed themselves. 'What do you want of a minister?' asked the young man who was holding the lines, looking down at me pale and scared like. 'Oh, nothing,' says I, 'only I'd like to have him take notice of a genuine example of divine justice. A man, to keep himself and wife from starving, turns in and helps keep some hundreds of other families at the starving point, and this is what he gets for it. One ought to be able to preach a very edifying discourse from this topic to a full-fed congregation!'

"Then there went up a shout, and one man said, 'He's no chicken!' and another said, 'If he is, he's a game one!' But the young man didn't say anything. He didn't laugh, either. I don't know what happened then, but the next I knew I was in the car and the superintendent was asking if anybody would drive it to the stables. The conductor had 'skinned out' at the first volley, and the superintendent didn't seem to fancy the job of driving himself. Then the young man spoke up: 'I think the drivers are right,' he said. 'The company treated them like brutes; but they had no right to injure this man. I'll drive his car for him until he gets able to take his place, if it's a month, if you'll keep him on your rolls.'

"Then the crowd cheered, and the superintendent, seeing how the land lay, said that was all right, took out his book, and asked the fellow's name. He said he didn't want no pay—just send the money to me. Then he told them to call off the police and he'd drive the car to the stables. So the police stepped back, and he said to the women on the sidewalk—most of 'em strikers' wives—'Come on, ladies, and take a ride at the company's expense. I'm the first driver the company ever had who could treat his friends to a ride without fear of a spotter.'

"There was a deal of laughing, the women crowded in, and we started on. Everybody was so pleased at the turn things had taken that we had no trouble at all. When they took me out at the stables I kind of fainted, and the next thing I knew I was here at home. The very next day the company began to weaken, and the strike was off in a day or two more; but my man has kept right on. I s'pose he would do it one more week, but I'm not going to let him, if I can help it. So I'm going to-morrow to look after a little business at Garden Square and see how much I can stand at the same time."

"But to-morrow is Sunday, Jonas."

"Then we'll go to church, too," said the husband jocosely, "that is as near one as we're ever likely to get to one again," he added bitterly. "There's Brother Kishu's church right handy by. We can hear the music and think how nice it would be to go to heaven in that kind of an elevator—and attend to my business at the Square, too."

"What kind of *business* have you got at the Square, Jonas?" asked the wife with good-humored incredulity.

"It's public business, Hannah," answered the man with suspicious gravity. "You see, I've become a public man since I was hauled around in the mud on a public street—public characters always have to get down into the mud, you know. Just now, the city fathers are trying to open a street across the Square, and they have invited me to go and look at it and say what I think about the matter."

"You!"

"Yes."

"Jonas Underwood?"

"The same."

"Now you're making game of me."

"Did I ever?"

"Did you ever miss a chance to! Who sent you the invitation, I'd like to know?"

"It was sent me by special order of Judge Riggs."

"Who brought it?" asked the wife incredulously.

"It came by special messenger," evasively.

"It must, for the carrier hasn't stopped here for months. I suppose I was out when it came?"

"Well, no, my dear, you were in; in fact, you brought it yourself."

"Jonas Underwood, you know it's not so. I haven't brought a letter or any other scrap of paper except that old *Herald* into this house in a month!"

"And it was in the *Herald* I saw the invitation."

"That's another of your games. Show it to me now if you dare," the wife responded, shaking her finger at him threateningly.

"Well, if you won't believe me, there it is!"

The woman took the paper and looked where her husband's finger pointed. She saw an advertisement calling for certain persons, and the heirs of certain other persons, "and all others having interests to be affected thereby, to come in and show cause, if any they have, why Rockridge Avenue should not be extended through and across the said Garden Square."

She read it through carefully and then said in a tone of disappointment:

"Your name isn't here, Jonas."

"Very true, my dear, but one of those whose names are there had the distinguished honor of being my grandmother, and as I'm the only one left on earth to represent her, it devolves on me to maintain the honor of the family. Now, as I can't tell what objection I have to Rockridge Avenue going across the Square until I see how much it would hurt it, I want to go and examine the ground before I answer the summons."

"Jonas," said the wife, half-laughing and half-angry, "I do think you are the most provoking man that ever lived. I really believe you would have your joke if you were dying."

"Thank you, dear," answered the husband dryly. "It is not every man who has been married twenty-five years whose wife is absolutely sure he will die happy!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH OF THE GOLDEN LILIES.

The Church of the Golden Lilies had been closed for more than two months. The dust of the broad avenue had settled in the crevices of its exquisite façade, and almost hid the golden lines of the Scriptural legend carved upon the massive doors. The impaled Christ had looked coldly down from the gorgeous window, gashed with hard lines, and giving scarce a hint of the fire that hid within the twice ten thousand pieces of stained glass which made it the artistic wonder of an age given to labored effects rather than grandeur or simplicity. Only when the evening sun flashed through the window high above the pulpit in the western gable and fell upon the thorn-crowned head, with the wreath of golden lilies just above it, did there seem to be a soul in the vast edifice standing silent and empty by day and by night. All the other windows were carefully screened lest even their tinted light might dim the freshness of the matchless interior.

But twice in all the sultry summer had the softly modulated chimes told aught except the hourly message of time's flight. The fitful breezes of the dawn, the glistering heat-waves of the panting noon, and the stifling air of night alike had borne to the ears of the city's toilers greetings from the tower of the Golden Lilies, telling that an hour had passed. That was all the service the church had done for humanity during this time—all the revenue for good derived from the hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in that heap of white marble and veined porphyry and the almost priceless corner-lot on which it stood. Perhaps not all. It may be, the lesson of the pictured Christ was not wholly lost, nor the pointing of the slender spires quite unheeded.

The city was proud of the Church of the Golden Lilies. It was one of the sights no stranger missed. It was especially beautiful when the moonlight fell upon its marble towers and tempered with soft shadows the somewhat garish whiteness of its ornate walls. It was known, too, that the full moon of summer sometimes imitated the sun's trick and made up for the lack of interior illumination, by shining through the one unguarded window and casting its mellow light upon the tinted Christ-head with an absolutely rapturous effect. Hundreds had watched night after night for these rare displays. Let us hope the sight brought consolation to some—that even the tones of the faithful bells were not lost, but found an answering chord in some weary soul that gave back an echo of bettered impulse or higher resolve.

Twice only in all those weeks had the dust-laden doors been opened—once to welcome a bride whose nuptials accident or economy had crowded over into the "heated term." It was a dull, depressing ceremony, though the hour was morning and the bride as beautiful as a dream. The unused church seemed full of vengeful echoes. The volunteer ushers performed their unaccustomed duties but awkwardly. The white ribbon which needlessly fenced off the invited guests from the curious on-lookers appeared ludicrously out of place. The loiterers whom the open doors and waiting carriages attracted, fanned themselves and mopped their sweaty brows as they languidly watched the ceremony, commenting, in what could hardly be called undertones, upon its incidents. The clergyman was a stranger who seemed afraid of the echoes in the great temple. The organ's notes were harsh, as if the dust had settled in the unused pipes. There was even a discordant clangor in the bells as they pealed out the "Wedding March." "Out of season" was plainly stamped on the whole affair, and one could almost hear the unpleasant comments of absent friends upon the unusual proceeding. July weddings were not looked upon with favor by the congregation of the Golden Lilies. Poor bride! the very church's blessing on her new estate seemed to have in it an echo of foreboding.

One other time the doors had swung open. One of the richest on the long list of "solid" men in the congregation was brought home and laid in solemn pomp before its altar, that his funeral pageant might traverse the broad aisles of the Church of the Golden Lilies. All the "heavy" men in the city and many prudent ones who desired to be thought "heavy" came to do homage to the dead man's success. There were few mourners, and those did not seem overwhelmed with grief; but everything was in good taste—everything except a woman whom none knew, who wore mourning so deep as to attract attention, led a child by the hand and seemed deeply afflicted, though she did not join the funeral *cortége.*

But at length the Church of the Golden Lilies has resumed business. The doors are once more opened to welcome its accustomed throngs. The bells ring out a joyous invitation, both to those who have been afield and to those who have hidden behind closed blinds during the "heated term." The September rains have washed its white front. The golden text upon the door has been retouched. The dove, down-shooting toward the altar, has been freshly gilt. The slender Gothic spires, that stand like heavenward-pointing sentinels at either angle of the gorgeous front, are gay with freshly-burnished tips and newly-painted frames about the lancet dormers which show like peep-holes amid the mottled slates. The famous window, which of itself would have made the church immortal in the world of art, has been furbished until every component piece burns with its own especial luster. The aisles have been recarpeted and the upholstery about the organ and pulpit renewed. There is a hint of russet and green where there was blue and gold before. The former trimmings were not in the least frayed—hardly did the silky nap show a trace of pressing palms—but it was not "good form" for a church like the Golden Lilies to use always the same upholstery. Esthetic effects are by no means to be despised, and soothing influences no doubt tend to a devotional frame of mind. Then, too, blue and gold were out of harmony with the autumn styles, and no warmth of religious fervor could enable the ladies of a congregation like the Golden Lilies to feel quite at ease in a setting of blue and gold while they were dressed in olive and brown. One might as well plant a sunflower in a bank of periwinkle. If they were to develop a Christian spirit, it was needful that they should have harmonious surroundings. So the fittings of the church have been made to conform with the requirements of fashion, in order that no sense of incongruity shall mar the worshipers' devotion during the ensuing year.

The streets have that curious stillness which characterizes the godless Sabbaths of the heated term when the good and rich are all afield, and only the poor and wicked stroll aimlessly along the echoing streets. The country strollers have not yet become familiar with municipal environment. The wayfarers walk quietly; the echo of the pavement jars upon ears that have been unaccustomed to the sound of footsteps. The trees in the little park that flanks the church upon the southward are beginning to show touches of color among the green foliage. Soft, yellow leaves lie about in the grass, which shows fresh and green above the withered, dust-choked spikes of summer. It is one of the city's breathing places, but only respectably dressed loiterers are allowed to linger in its purlieus. Some elderly gentlemen sit here and there upon the benches enjoying the sunshine. There are nurse-girls, with white caps and pretty faces too, and young men with large canes, who watch the nurses as they go back and forth with their charges. The horse-chestnuts along the avenue are shedding their blotched, lemon-tinted leaves and dropping their green bolls and brown nuts upon the pavement. The leaves rustle pleasantly as the ladies troop past, their dresses brushing them aside and their boots crushing them daintily.

It was of splendid quality, the train of worshipers which poured through the great arched entrance into the vestibule of the Church of the Golden Lilies. The summer sun and wind had given strength and color; rest and change had driven away the traces of social dissipation and over-work. "Rich and cultured" would have been the verdict of the most careless observer who had watched them mount the shining steps and seen the greeting of the waiting ushers. The confidence of success was in every mien. They were not gaudily dressed—not many of them at least—but in the very plainest of the costumes there was a richness and costliness which was more impressive than the gleam of jewels. Even these were not lacking; but they were noticeable for quality rather than profusion.

The men were less numerous than the women, and most of them were above middle age. Of the younger men, there was a class who seemed less at ease and self-assured than the others. One wondered whether there were not some thrifty seekers for advantage among them—men who regarded church-going as a sort of investment and favored the Golden Lilies because of the "solid" character of its membership. Who can blame the well-limbed servants of Mammon if they improve such opportunity to make acquaintance under favorable auspices with well-dowered maidens who frequent a shrine which is itself a guaranty of wealth?

At the right of the inner door which opened on the central aisle stood, on this first morning of the church-going season, Mr. Wilton Kishu, the leading layman of the congregation. The edifice was almost as often referred to as "Kishu's church" as by the name by which it had been dedicated. Indeed, the name was said to have been given it at his suggestion, or more properly in deference to his leadership in everything pertaining to its construction. He was not the richest man whose name was on the roll of members, but his activity took a more positive turn than theirs to church affairs. He had given more than any other toward the erection of the church, and was indefatigable in attending to the details of its furnishing and adornment. In fact, it was chiefly through his influence that some half a score of years before the church had decided to remove from the dingy down-town edifice upon which sin and traffic were encroaching with annoying confidence, to a more eligible location. The old sanctuary had become so distasteful and inconvenient to the prosperous and fastidious members whose residences lined the up-town avenues, that many left it and joined other churches. When, therefore, a rich brewer offered an almost fabulous sum for the consecrated ground and the historic structure, it was held to be a clear indication of the will of Providence that the time-honored landmark of the church in which the fathers worshiped when they brought their imperiled faith across the sea, should be abandoned and the altar of the Lord set up in a locality more convenient to his favored children. There were some who shed tears at the prospect of leaving a spot sanctified by so many sweet and sacred memories, but they were mostly poor, though of course deserving, people who were unable to contribute much for the support of the church.

Mr. Kishu had prepared three lists of the communicants and their yearly offerings. One composing the names of those whose yearly donations it required four figures to express, one of those requiring three figures, and the other, those for whom two or even one sufficed. All of the first but one favored the change; so did nearly all the second. Very many of the third wept, but were silent. Of course they could make no serious protest. What could such a body of weaklings do toward "running" a church without the presence and favor of those whom the Lord had blessed not only with abundance, but also with liberality? The one rich man who dissented from the general verdict did protest, however, bitterly and vehemently; and when the removal was decided upon he withdrew from the church and had never been inside the walls of the new edifice. Indeed, he ceased attending church altogether, and had been heard to say very bitter things about his former brethren. It was a loss very deeply regretted, as he was not only one of the richest, but among the most liberal, of the congregation.

It was known that some of the old members would be unable to follow the church in the proposed hegira. If they should, it was not likely that the new edifice would prove altogether homelike to those to whom the duskiness of the old structure was a welcome shield to the shabbiness of their attire, and it was kindly agreed that the church should forever maintain a "down-town mission," in order that these impecunious members might at no time suffer for want of one to break to them the Bread of Life.

The change was altogether profitable to the church and congregation, in a material point of view, at least. The price the brewer paid for the old sanctuary was half enough to build the new temple. Mr. Kishu gave the lot outright—an act of charity which was rewarded with notable promptness, by a providential enhancement of the value of realty in the immediate neighborhood, which, as accident would have it, chiefly belonged to Mr. Kishu. Besides this, he defrayed the entire cost of the great window which covered nearly the whole front, sending down on either side the great portal three narrow panels that shot up with fine effect, beside the wide expanse above the central arch, which stretched up to the very peak of the gothic roof, where a crown of thorns, in which the thorns were almost hid by golden lilies, overhung the head of the suffering Christ. In the very apse, the artist—without the knowledge of the donor, of course—had deftly and delicately traced in crystal white letters, which showed like porcelain against the duller-tinted mass, the legend, "W. K." Some said the lily-crown was a delicate compliment to Lilian, the golden-haired daughter of Mr. Kishu; and others, that it was a quaint conceit of the child, now grown to be a woman, whom even his enemies admitted that he loved better than himself. At all events it was a conceit worthy of the honor it received.

Mr. Kishu was the chief factotum of the Church of the Golden Lilies. He managed the finances; engineered the Sabbath-school; looked after the Mission, and, generally, took care that the Golden Lilies was in the van of all good and worthy works. His clerks were not required to belong to the church, but it was natural that he should incline most favorably toward those who worshiped at his especial shrine. Besides, he found that the work of the church was much more faithfully performed if intrusted to the hands of those dependent upon him for their salaries. He generally arranged for it to be done either before or after business hours, and in this manner was enabled to run the affairs of the church much more cheaply than could otherwise have been done. As for the clerks, they were, of course, anxious to retain their employer's favor. He was upon the whole a good man to serve. He did not pay as high wages as some, but invariably gave each of his employés a present at Christmas which was nearly equal to the deficit in salary. By this means he obtained at small expense the reputation of being a very liberal employer. His favorites among his clerks were employed as ushers, and were liberally paid by the church, as they deserved to be, for their service was very nearly faultless.

Mr. Kishu stood outide the middle door and welcomed each of the returning members of the congregation with unaffected warmth. He was not only devoted to the Golden Lilies, but he had a genuine affection for every one who added to it either wealth or dignity. He did not move from this place, but those who did not have to pass through the door by which he stood approached for a shake of the hand, or, if he were particularly engaged, contented themselves with the smile and welcoming gesture which showed his recognition of their presence.

So the bells rang out a welcome, and the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies settled once more into their accustomed places. There were a few strange faces; some empty seats: but the organ pealed forth the same mighty waves of sound; the stained windows flooded the splendid auditorium with a soothing, sensuous light, while the soprano was hardly inferior to the *prima donna* of the coming opera season.

CHAPTER III.

LALEIN.

THE pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies could catch a glimpse of the assembling congregation by opening a finger's breadth the door that led from his study to the pulpit, though his view was somewhat obstructed by the floral decorations of the platform. He had directed these himself, almost giving offence to some of his parishioners whose conservatories were full of rare specimens, by declining their offers. Bunches of golden-rod flanked the desk, through which gleamed the red berries of the ash and spikes of fruit-laden thorn. In the background were great banks of the dark green leaves and brown heads of the *Typha latifolia,* pierced with flaming shafts of the gladiolus, and above them branches of maple and dogwood glowing with the wondrous tints of early autumn. Through the whole church floated a faint perfume of the tuberose, not a blossom of which was visible. The platform on which the pulpit stood seemed covered with the common beauties of field and forest, while heaped up on the altar-table were ripe fruits, with ears of corn and yellow heads of grain. There was something almost barbaric in the glowing profusion of this display, the effect of which was greatly enhanced by the elegance of the surroundings and the fervid lights which fell upon the decorations through the stained glass of the windows. The congregation were very proud of their young pastor's love of flowers and the ease with which he used even the most garish contrasts to produce harmonious results; but never had he succeeded quite so well as in this autumnal welcome to his people. It was with difficulty that the gathering worshipers could restrain an inclination to applause.

This fondness for nature's products was in harmony with the man. Square-shouldered, bronze-faced, with muscles like whip-cord, the pastor of the Golden Lilies not only loved wild flowers, but liked to seek them in their own habitats. He was a man who relished storm as well as sunshine, and, though scarce above the average height, not one whom a blackguard would care to face when inspired by righteous wrath. Strong-armed, whole-hearted, and "level-headed," was the popular estimate of his character. He was well-bred, too—that was a matter of course, being an Eastman—a skilled sportsman and a yachtsman of renown. Men liked him; women admired him. Mentally, he was solid rather than brilliant; morally, he seemed to have a sort of unconscious reliance upon God and an utter contempt for the devil.

The pastor watched the gathering audience for a moment, his face flushing with pleasure. The giants who wielded the material forces of civilization, the culture which molded its literature, and the fashion which shaped society, were all there, waiting eagerly for his teaching. Or was it teaching which they sought? If not, what was the desire that impelled their assembling? Worship? What was it, and what was his relation to it? Was Christianity only "a form of worship," and he a mere figure in that form? A cloud settled upon his face. He could not doubt, had never doubted in his life. God, beneficence, and truth were fundamental postulates of his existence. And the Christ—ah, if he knew the Christ-will, he would be quite content. Did he know it? The thought troubled him. He turned away with a sigh and began to pace up and down the spacious and luxurious study. Why should he question as to the path of duty? Was not the Word clear? Was not the truth plain? Was not Christianity the same—always the same, now and forever? Had it not been one and the same thing to all peoples for countless generations? Stop; *had* it been the *same?* Was the Word always identical in significance, or was it one thing to one age, one clime, one people, and more or less to another? Might it not be that he had not seen all that he ought to have seen, known all that he ought to have known, of the message he had undertaken to declare—of the role he had assumed in the great Passion Play of life?

As he turned in his hasty walk, the young pastor read above the door which led to the pulpit, the text traced in golden letters in the original Greek: "Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word."

He ceased his hurried walk and gazed fixedly at the words of the apostles while they waited tremblingly the crucial test of the new faith upon the morrow:

Δὸς τοῖς δούλοις σου μετὰ παῤῥησίας πάσης λαλεῖν τὸν λογον σου.

Who placed the legend there and insisted on the graceful lines of the original text? Who shall say that the Infinite had no thought, when He inspired its inscription, of this day when Murvale Eastman should read its characters and be troubled by their import?

"*Meta parrhasias páses*," "with all boldness," he murmured with that instinctive tracing of radical significance which characterizes the lover of the Greek tongue. "Hardly 'boldness'—freedom, fullness, rather. It must have *required* 'boldness,' but unrestraint was the quality of speech they prayed for strength to exhibit. They needed 'boldness' that they might display unrestraint."

He walked more slowly back and forth. "*Lalein!*" he said musingly. "What a strange word! I never thought of it before. It was Luke who used it, too, and the 'beloved physician' knew his Greek. He tells us, tells *me*, to prattle like a child, to speak artlessly and with unrestraint. Does he mean also *without reservation?* Am I called upon to say to this people—the people over whom I have been set as a shepherd, a leader—*all* that I feel, all that I believe, about the Christ-thought, the Christ-purpose, the mission of the Christ to man? Can I? *Dare* I?"

A look of quiet resolution began to show upon his troubled face, but the blood left his cheeks and his lips grew white. His hands, browned as they were by sun and wind, grew suddenly cold. He rubbed them together as if upon the deck of his yacht in the chill of a summer storm. The bell was tolling its last warning to the loiterers. Upon the table by his side lay his hat and gloves.

Before him was his sermon neatly type-written; with it a letter, creased and worn. He took the sermon in his hand and mechanically turned its pages. The organ had begun its greeting to the worshippers reassembled after the summer vacation. An artist presided at the keyboard. How the echoes swelled and pulsed through the great arches, in glad congratulation first, then softly rising into solemn strains of grateful praise!

The pastor put aside his sermon and sank upon his knees, holding the letter still before him. An usher opened the door from the audience-room. Seeing the pastor in the attitude of prayer, he closed it quickly and drew back in confusion, whispering to Mr. Kishu, who was on his way to speak a last word to his pastor before the service began. It was this good man's habit—a very kind one, people thought—always to give the minister a send-off of approval, a metaphorical pat upon the back before he went to his work. This time he turned back and went on tiptoe to his pew. Everybody wondered that he did so.

"'Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!'" said the kneeling pastor, still holding the creased letter before him. He thought of the bloody drops that fell in the midnight garden as he wiped the sweat from his brow. The Master was about to die: *he* was ordained to live. Would it have been easier for Murvale Eastman to die for the faith he had inherited, or for the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies to live and obey the injunction which barred his pathway to the sacred desk? Again he uttered the wail of Gethsemane. "Nevertheless, not my will!" he finally murmured.

The organ ceased its greeting and gave forth the tremulous note of expectation which was wont to herald the pastor's coming. How often had he waited for it! Never before had it been dreaded. He rose to his feet, the letter in his left hand: with it the card containing the hymns and selections for the day. He looked at his sermon as if questioning what disposition he should make of it.

"*Lalein*," he murmured, "speak freely, artlessly: 'By the mouth of babes and sucklings.'"

He laid the sermon on the table, noiselessly swung back the door, walked through the rifts of homely flowers, and stood in his place behind the desk. The organ sounded out a peal which has still something of the military flavor of the age in which it was composed, and the congregation rose and joined in that grandest of Christian melodies, the clarion notes of a soldier's exultant pæan of praise and aspiration. As the echoes died away the pastor raised his hand, the audience bowed their heads; a few words of reverent invocation; the congregation resumed their seats and a hymn was announced.

The opening exercises were brief. Many noted the pallor of the pastor's visage, and some wondered at the huskiness of his voice. The lessons which he read seemed strangely inappropriate. The collection was omitted, though the ushers had taken up the silken bags which were the badges of their office and waited for the accustomed opportunity. The pastor did not or would not see that the official suggesters of charitable desire only waited for him to resume his seat before beginning the task of public solicitation for means to carry on the work of the church. He stood looking fixedly at the congregation. The closed Bible lay upon the desk before him, upon it the hymnal. His left hand rested on them, holding the crumpled letter; his right wandered aimlessly back and forth over the smooth, velvet surface of the newly-upholstered desk.

"Speak freely, without restraint," he was saying over and over to himself. *Did* it mean also without reservation?

Why did he keep asking himself this question? What was there in the wondering faces of the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies to cause him to hesitate as to his duty? A cloud settled on Lilian Kishu's face, tears gathered in her eyes, as she saw his embarrassment. The audience looked at one another in surprise. The minister's unaccustomed hesitation produced a feeling of uncertainty, almost of annoyance. Only Mr. Kishu was undisturbed. A look of calm expectancy was on his face. He had heard of the minister at prayer a moment before entering the pulpit, and was repeating over and over to himself the couplet:

For Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

He was sure that when such a man as Murvale Eastman sank to his knees before beginning his year's task, great results would follow.

The one thing that the Golden Lilies needed to complete its renown among the churches was a revival. Strenuous efforts to secure one had repeatedly been made, but without success. Numerous plans had been adopted for special work among the young people, meaning thereby the young men of the congregation. Singularly enough, the larger portion of the young women were already members of the church. It seemed to be a matter of course with them, as if it were hardly respectable that they should remain outside the fold. But the young men—that is, the young men of the best families—seemed strangely indifferent, although the sons of the worshipers at the Golden Lilies were no worse than other young men of their wealth and social position. Of course young men of means could not be expected to lead the lives of anchorites. Such things do not happen in these days.

Mr. Kishu had frequently been heard to say that he would gladly give five thousand dollars if the Golden Lilies could have "a real old-fashioned revival." Considering that he could have no personal interest in the matter, himself, all the members of his household being, as he was wont to say, already "within the shelter of the fold," this was considered an extremely liberal offer for a divine blessing. But neither this nor repeated conference and prayer-meetings, nor even the persistent use of "Moody and Sankey hymns," had served to produce the desired result. More than once the question had been mooted of procuring a professional "evangelist," and turning the church and congregation over to him to "run" as he saw fit, until the object of their desire had been attained. This proposition, to his credit be it said, Mr. Kishu always vigorously and successfully opposed. The Church of the Golden Lilies, he declared, could not consistently adopt such methods—tricks of the trade, if he might be allowed to call them such—which would be entirely proper for a church occupying a less prominent position. Besides, though there might be a good many conversions at such meetings, he doubted if they would be of a kind that would be of much advantage to the Golden Lilies. What *they* needed, if he might speak plainly, was a revival *among their own set.*

This desideratum, for the first time, Mr. Kishu thought he now saw a reasonable prospect of having realized. He was a shrewd observer of human nature, and from what he had himself seen of his pastor since his return from the customary vacation, as well as from the information conveyed to him by the usher, he felt satisfied that the young minister had returned to his work very deeply impressed with his responsibility; and knowing his ability and earnestness, the manager of the Golden Lilies anticipated therefrom the very best results. Already he imagined a genuine Pentecostal season begun, and saw in the daily papers flaming head-lines of a "Great Revival in Mr. Kishu's Church." So, while others wondered at the embarrassment of the young minister, Mr. Kishu calmly folded his hands above the comfortable expanse of his rotund person, closed his eyes, and waited with a contented smile the sensation he felt sure the congregation was about to experience.

The congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies were very proud of their pastor. He was young, gifted, sprung from a family both old and rich, and withal "a perfect gentleman." He had succeeded one of the most noted luminaries of the church, who had been imported at enormous expense, before the passage of the Alien Labor Contract law, to do honor to the pulpit of the finest church in all the land, which in great part had been built with the money of the rich brewer. There were some who thought, when Dr. Eudimon's portly form appeared in the new pulpit, that he would never have come to the old conventicle, whose trussed sides were now bulging with the weight of heaped-up tons of malt, while its front still held the brown stone on whose stained surface was yet plainly visible the mocking inscription, "Dedicated to the Service of God, December —, MDCC—." However, he had served the Church of the Golden Lilies faithfully, and with rare tact had not only endeared himself to his people, but, without awakening any jealousy among his brethren, had advanced the church over which he presided to a front rank in its denomination as a promoter of good works. Not only was Mr. Kishu his right-hand man, but he had taken care to have it understood that the Golden Lilies was Mr. Kishu's church rather than Dr. Eudimon's. As a fruit of this wise policy of "booming" his leading parishioner, he soon found that the grateful Kishu lost no opportunity of returning the favor in kind. The result was that wherever the Church of the Golden Lilies was known, Mr. Kishu became a household word and Dr. Eudimon a revered name.

Just why the vigorous and accomplished young divine who ministered to a humble church under the shadow of the Rocky Mountain peaks, was selected after a full year of mourning to succeed the lamented Eudimon, it would be difficult to say. Murvale Eastman had never found out. He had come to his work without any spirit of self-seeking, however, and in the two years which had succeeded his transplantation, the church had found no reason to regret its choice. His modesty was linked with so much merit and accompanied with so many pleasant qualities that Mr. Kishu obtained great credit for his discovery, and the Church of the Golden Lilies was everywhere congratulated on having such a layman and such a pastor.

Never before had he proved insufficient to any occasion, public or private. Now his voice was noticeably tremulous and broken as he told the chapter and verse of his text, while the crumpled letter which he held before him shook so perceptibly that some of the congregation wondered if he were not ill. They did not know how their faces swam before him—Mr. Kishu's fat visage strangely mixed up with the sweet, tearful countenance of his daughter, and a dark face, framed in mourning bands, under the gallery, with one that the worms were gnawing in a costly tomb across the river. Eastman was not the man to give way to nervousness, however. His mind was made up. The color came back to his cheeks, steadiness to his eye, and his voice was calm enough as he repeated the words of his text:

"*There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.*"

Mr. Kishu's eyes opened; so did his mouth. A thrill of surprise, almost of horror, ran through the congregation. The sensation the manager predicted had come, but it was not of the sort he expected. What did the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies mean by choosing such a text at a time when Labor and Capital were at variance, and the strike which had been "on" so long in the city was only half settled?

CHAPTER IV.

PLUSIUS AND PENES.

If the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies were startled by the text their pastor announced, they were still more surprised at the manner in which he presented his subject. There was nothing of the smooth, unruffled flow of well-chosen words to which they had been accustomed. The speaker's discourse was an evident attempt to lead his hearers along a path not entirely familiar to his own feet. His language bore the marks of recent forging. His convictions had not been dulled by too engrossing study of the form in which they should be presented.

"'There were two men in one city'—the *same* city, the Wisdom of the Seventy hath it—'the one rich and the other poor,'" he repeated. "This sentence is an epitome of history. Designed for a particular case, it is yet a universal truth. In it is found the whole continued story of humanity. Not in one city only, but in all that have dotted the fair earth's surface; not in one land alone, but in all climes and countries; not in a single age, but in all the cycles through which the wail of human woe has sounded—always and everywhere, side by side, have dwelt the rich and the poor. And always their juxtaposition has provoked the same inquiries, in every thoughtful mind, in every God-fearing heart: 'Why are they, the one Rich and the other Poor? Must they be forever two, separate and distinct, and dwell forever in the same city?'

"These are questions which philosophy, humanity, and civilization have long asked—which Christianity has often echoed, sometimes with an upward and sometimes with a downward inflection; questions which have sometimes provoked unbelief, sometimes paralyzed faith, and often nerved hopelessness to endure undeserved wrong. They constitute the hidden mystery of that mighty problem which each groaning To-day propounds to every exultant To-morrow. Are the Rich to grow richer forever, and the Poor to grow forever feebler and more dependent? Are the Rich to be forever counted the 'better class,' and the Poor, the worse? Are the Rich to be always regarded as the chief supporters of law and order, government, religion, society, and the Poor forever esteemed the nurslings of discontent and peril? Must it always be accounted better to be rich than to be wise, or strong, or pure? Is the dollar-mark the real measure of human values? Shall the wrong of To-day forever bolster the evil of To-morrow? Is charity the only obligation that attaches to the Rich? Is submission to the inevitable the highest virtue of the Poor?

"Some phases of this question the past has answered, sometimes doubtfully, often weakly and imperfectly, always with blood and tears. Each age has deemed its share of the eternal problem the hardest of all to solve, the obstacles it faced the most difficult to overcome. Each new advance is always heralded as the last, all-sufficient triumph of Right over Wrong; the Armageddon, after which is to come eternal peace, because the cause of all evil is finally destroyed. We call it to-day the conflict between Labor and Capital. These terms are only names for convenient abstractions, painted balls which the juggler with words tosses in the air for the amusement of gaping multitudes. There is no conscience, no manhood in them. They are merely dull, inert, imaginary forces, whose relations are to be solved by algebraic formula, regardless of men and women, human souls and human weal and woe. There is no such entity as Labor; there is no such fact as Capital. They simply represent contrasted conditions of human life.

"The prophet was wiser than we are. He dealt with the concrete. Men were the subject of his immortal parable—'the one Rich and the other Poor.' The Wisdom of the Seventy stated the contrast in two words of the Greek tongue: the one, 'Plusius'—rich, full to overflowing, burdened with abundance; the other, 'Penes'—poor, a worker for his daily bread, the child of *pen*-ury. The one, a man having more than he can consume; the other having always to struggle for enough. How has civilization defined the relations of these two men? Why should we care for the *things* about which we prate? Wealth is but a coat, the bedizening of a soul. Labor is only an application of human force. It is the *man* who is the important thing, whether hid by a garment of cloth of gold, or naked and sweaty, struggling with adversity.

"What has Christianity to say to believers thus differently conditioned? Is burdening wealth or crippling penury the inevitable rescript of eternal fate? Can we answer these questions? Is it permissible to ask them?

"Plusius and Penes! We all know them: they are our neighbors: they 'dwell in the same city' with us—sometimes in the same street. As men, they are very much alike. They love and hate; do and dare and suffer, each like the other. Plusius may be wise and Penes foolish; or Penes may be wise and Plusius an ass. Plusius may be good and Penes bad; or Penes may be pure and Plusius foul. Man for man, Penes is able to accomplish less, and Plusius to do more, both of good and of evil; but Penes and his friends greatly outnumber Plusius and his friends. Plusius is apt to be the better-natured, because he is better fed. Plusius is generally the shrewder, and Penes the braver. Penes makes wonderful discoveries, and Plusius profits by them. Plusius loves his wife and children and delights to see them decked in gay apparel. Penes loves whom he loves just as fervently; his heart aches to see them over-worked or under-fed; and his brain grows wild when rags and squalor touch them. They change places sometimes; for the masque of life is full of contradictions. Then Plusius wonders how he could ever have been like Penes, and Penes marvels that he should have been like Plusius.

"What is the difference between these classes? Do not call them classes, my brother; species and genus, they are alike. You remember the queen-bee. There is but one in a hive. She has half a million subjects, a standing army of a hundred thousand; courtiers and suitors by the thousand, too. Yet she was only one of the despised neuters; the counterpart of those who fall down and worship and obey, who fight and serve and suffer, that she may rule in safety and know no want. What makes the distinction? She was separated while yet a worm from her white, shapeless fellows who were destined to the common neuter's lot. A thousand of them were killed by poison-stings in babyhood that her life might not be corrupted by their proximity. The cell she occupied was isolated from the young swarm's life; a royal body-guard watched continually over her. The nectar she was fed upon was doubly distilled. Slothfulness rather than activity was forced upon her. What others do for themselves, willing servants insisted upon doing for her. So she grew up a queen, sleek and bright, and no doubt fascinating to them that pay court to her: but the others grew into brown, uncomely workers, lean, sting-armed, busy, anxious, and bustling; unpleasant but useful creatures from whose labors come the sweets of the hive. The queen's children will be like them too, all but the drones.

"In like manner Plusius differs from Penes, not in nature, character, or worth. Plusius *need not* work with his hands that he may live; Penes *must*. That is all. Take away that difference and you could not distinguish the one from the other.

"Plusius *may* work harder than Penes; hand and brain *may* be fuller; he may even accomplish more by his individual exertion; but it is not needful that he should in order that he and his children may live in comfort. If he labors it is only to increase his store, to widen the distance between himself and Penes, or to excel his own friends in luxury, power, or display. Penes, on the other hand, *must* work—work or suffer—work or starve—he and his loved ones. It matters not whether for himself or at another's bidding; whether for daily dole or in the hope of recompense from a ripening harvest; whether the alternative be instant or a little delayed—it is still the same. Plusius may number the days of his life without toil if he chooses so to do. By his own good fortune, by his cunning or his wit, by the flotsam which the tide of to-day brings to his feet, or the ebb of yesterday heaped about his cradle, he is relieved from the hard conditions which rest on Penes' shoulders. But for this one thing, Plusius might be Penes; and Penes, Plusius.

"So they dwell 'in the same city,' with only this wall between them—this wall which Plusius insists shall not be torn down, and which Penes is always endeavoring to scale, only to join with Plusius in his outcry, if he succeeds. Plusius says he represents Society, Civilization, and Religion; that Society demands for its salvation that the barrier between him and Penes shall forever remain. In this he is right, if by 'society' we mean existing forms and conditions, to-day's life and to-day's thought.

"But is Society right, always right, entirely right? It has always claimed to be right, though it has not always accepted the same standard of right; nor in all lands approved the same forms. In one land or another it has sanctioned all evil; at one time or another it has upheld every crime. Evil is often ancient; the good as often new. Only a few centuries ago, Might was the literal measure of Right. Then the King's grace was the subject's only safeguard. Not many lives ago, Society gave the virgin to the lord's embrace as a right. Within a lifetime in our own land, the master might lawfully compel the soul he owned to submit to his lust, or take life for disobedience. Society has burned men and defiled women; beaten, crucified, slain old and young, fair and foul, the man crowned with a noble purpose, the child at play and woman big with young. These things it did always in the name of Right, of Law, of Mercy, in order to preserve its institutions and to save the world from evil men who taught that Society was not infallible.

"In the old days Society made martyrs of those who questioned its dictates; in these latter times, it brands them as visionaries. And many there be, in good sooth, that deserve it. Of them that were slain, not all were martyrs. Of them that clamored for change, not a few were worse than fools. Yet out of it all there has come some good.

Society may not be infallible, but it is, after all, the best average of every age. It is more likely to be right than they who seek for change, because the many are apt to be wiser than the few. Sometimes the few inoculate the many, so that then the multitude come over to the side of the few. Then Society changes front and ridicules and denounces what it yesterday revered. By and by, we look back at the change and call it Progress. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it only seems to be. Change for the sake of change—mere experiment—is always evil; only that which weakens wrong or strengthens right is wise.

"Then, too, Society is most likely to be right because it has Religion on its side. Sometimes it is one religion, and sometimes another. Yet all are divine to their disciples. The standard of morals is not always the same; the ideal of manhood not universal. To-day there are twice as many Buddhists as Christians, and half as many Mahometans. Society is Christian, Mahometan, or Buddhist, according to the prevailing ideal. It leans by turns on each of these systems of religious faith for support, and claims its customs and ideas to be true and perfect, because they are or profess to be in harmony with the precepts and ideals which each faith claims to be infallible and divine. Two elements are involved in this assumption of perfectibility: the character of the ideal and the conception of that ideal. The ideal may be true and the conception false, or the ideal itself may be a false one.

" He was wise who sang:

" ' Human hopes and human creeds
Have their roots in human needs.'

"All religious ideals are no doubt the best that the age and people which cherish them are able to formulate; no matter what their origin or character. The best that any man is capable of apprehending, that he believes the Divine to be. The best that any age approves, that it sets up as its religious ideal.

Our own age in its vital forces is Christian. Our society is builded on Christian precepts and ideals *as the past has interpreted.* Is it perfect? Is the ideal true and its exemplification faultless? The ideal claims to be a religion, fitted to the wants and promoting the best interests of universal humanity—a religion of equal rights, manhood, liberty, and universal righteousness.

" Is this Christian ideal of ours the one true conception of human relations on which society may safely rest? Why pause to argue? It has appealed for judgment to results: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' In the eighteen centuries last past, it challenges comparison with any and all other forms of belief and unbelief, in the good done to humanity; and the *onus* lies heavily upon any that would impeach its claim. It has not always been right, nor always the same. (Let us speak the truth whether the heavens fall or not; that is all we little ones can do for human betterment.) It has worn many guises: the cowl of the monk, the robe of the priest, the mail of the soldier. It has shed blood for error; crucified for unbelief; burned at the stake for innocent dissent; and sanctioned 'the sum of all villanies.' Every age and people have colored it with their vices and their weaknesses; but it has exalted the virtues and glorified the strength of each. Under its influence man has grown in stature, in liberty, in aspiration, and in courage to demand his rights. It has sometimes upheld the wrong; but much oftener sustained the right. In form and interpretation it has often changed; in spirit and the claim of beneficent design to man, it has remained the same, steadfast and unalterable.

"Society, builded on its *interpretation* of the Christian ideal, boasts ever the immutable character of its requirements, forgetful that Religion teaches what we believe rather than what we know. Society is but the shell of religious belief, its visible form and expression. Every now and then it grows too strait, cramps, crushes, cracks, bursts. Then another grows, only to meet a like fate. Forms are never eternal. The shell that is big enough for to-day is too narrow for to-morrow. In correcting one line another is deflected. Our society is the visible form of our idea of Christianity; nothing more, nothing less. It is the popular concretion of Christian ethics, of the good enjoined and the evil prohibited by Christian philosophy. Is it perfect? Examine your own measure of what may be done and what must not be left undone, before answering.

"One thing is indisputable: Christianity has fitted itself to human needs better than any other form of religious thought, and is broader, tenderer, and truer in its aspiration to-day than ever before. As a consequence, it has developed a truer, better manhood than the world has ever previously known. The undeniable proof of this is found in the fact that the weak demand more of the strong, and demand it more hopefully and more valorously, than they ever did before. But Society, which is the exponent of the accepted Christian ideal, declares the parable of the angry prophet to be the final verdict of the Divine in regard to human conditions. Is it true? Is this the kernel of our Christian faith—'the one Rich and the other Poor'?

"The Carpenter of Nazareth was one of Penes' friends. He worked for his father by day, and at night went fishing with Peter and John. His hands were hard, calloused, blistered. His nails were black and broken, and his Jewish gaberdine coarse and grimy. The sandal-strings chafed his feet, and sweat and dust defiled his body. He lived in peace, after the Tetrarch died, for thirty years laboring for his daily bread. Then he wandered about, living where he might and as he might, stirring up discontent among the people. Society disowned him. The recognized interpreters of the Divine will condemned him. The Romans despised him. The poor revered but distrusted him. A lover of pelf betrayed him. Society counted him a tramp; religion esteemed him a scoffer; politically he was regarded as a 'dangerous character.' Hardly one in this audience would permit his counterpart to enter the front door. The Christ whom being risen we worship, we would not take to our table, being incarnate. 'We have no use for rags and grime but to pity them.' He wore poverty as a crown."

A startled look flashed over the upturned faces of the congregation as they listened to this picture of One whom their fancy had so idealized that the stern facts of his environment seemed almost sacrilegious. Not heeding the effect of his words, the speaker continued:

"This is our Prophet, Son of God, Deliverer of the World, the 'Word that was with God in the beginning.' It matters not what we call him. He is our ideal. His words are our religion. He is the head of what we call 'the church,' a body with many creeds though but one Christ. It is on his precepts that society is founded, by his doctrines that citizen and subject, people and sovereign, profess to be guided. He is the standard of right for all and in all things.

"Plusius and his friends tell us that he is the God both of the Rich and the Poor, putting the Rich in the lead, as is but natural. They assure us that his teaching is that the Rich should be reconciled to abundance and the Poor to poverty; that the Rich should be content with what they can get and the Poor with what they have. They tell us that he who was cradled in a manger, and sweated in a Galilean carpenter shop until thirty years of age, is especially fond of costly temples; delights in luxurious surroundings; and, since his crucifixion, has become a 'gentleman,' quite fit to be received into good society so long as he remains invisible. Upon the same condition, they are willing that he should visit the hovel as well as the palace, and even be on intimate terms with the Poor. You see this condition prevents any breach of social order. An invisible friend cannot introduce discreditable acquaintances. He may assure the dweller in the hovel that he sits at rich men's tables and is cheek-by-jowl with Plusius and his friends; they do not mind that, as long as he does not bring the man of rags and grime into their circle.

"Plusius admits it to be his duty to be kind and pitiful to the poor. He is bound to give free alms, because the poor are starving; to found hospitals, because the poor are sick; to build churches, because the Lord loveth a cheerful giver; to support the preached Word, that the poor may have the 'good news' preached unto them; to support the charities of the church, that suffering may be relieved. By so doing he claims that he fulfils the Master's injunction, 'Do good to all men,' and exemplifies that 'righteousness greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,' which the Master makes the inflexible measure of Christian duty and the immutable condition of salvation.

"Penes and his brethren believe in the Man of Nazareth too—that is, the major part of them. Some wonder how he can reconcile such conflicting ideas, and others reject him because, as they say, 'he gives everything to the Rich and exhorts the Poor to be content with what is left.' We must be patient with them. These friends of Penes cannot understand why this 'very God,' who regulates all things, should give to one abundance greater than he can consume, and to another an appetite he can never hope to assuage. They may be very unreasonable, but a hungry man should be pardoned if his logic is not absolutely faultless.

"Plusius regards the matter quite otherwise. He explains that wealth and poverty come by divine ordainment, each being to Rich and Poor respectively a means of grace; poverty being given to one as a cross and wealth to another as a temptation. Of course he would rather be among the tempted than one of the tried; but it is not a matter of choice. God, who knoweth all things, hath, he contends, 'ordained one to sickness and another to health; one to riches and another to poverty,' not merely for the good of each, but for the good of all and his own glory. Wealth and poverty, he maintains, are essential conditions of the divine order, without which Society could not exist, and consequently he who seeks to limit or remove either of these co-ordinate and immutable conditions, is guilty of sacrilegious assault upon the divine purpose; is, in short, the enemy of Society and the foe of God. Hath not 'he whose word can ne'er be broken' said, 'The poor ye have always with you'? and if the poor, of course also the rich; since it follows, as the night the day, that where the one is the other *always must be.* So the two men dwell 'in the same city,' and if Plusius' view is correct, must forever remain, 'the one rich and the other poor,' types of the eternal will, examples of divine justice, love, and power!

"Be not afraid, my brother. 'Seek and ye shall find' is as true of to-day's appointed task as it was of yesterday's. Plusius and his friends may be in error; Penes and his friends may not have sought aright. The angry eye is rarely a faithful guide, and the torch borne by a bloody hand seldom shows the road to truth. Thus far, Plusius and Penes have indeed dwelt together 'in the same city,' but never without discord and clamor and blood. There have been many changes in their relations—and it is not yet certain that there will not be many more—without shock to Society or harm to Religion. It is for us to determine whether there shall be, or whether the pitiful story of the past shall be forever repeated."

Murvale Eastman had stood with the crumpled letter in his left hand, speaking without gesture, almost without change of tone, as if compelled by a thought which would not be denied expression. He hardly turned to the right or the left, yet each member of the wondering congregation seemed to feel his eyes looking down into theirs. As he concluded, he opened the letter and laid it upon the book before him.

"I have not spoken these words," he said, "entirely of my own will. In common with all thoughtful men, my attention has long been directed to these questions. In common, I trust, with all believers, I have prayed for light. A month ago I received this letter. The hand that penned it was already cold when it reached me. As a member of this congregation, the writer rebuked me for not having discussed the relation of Capital and Labor from this platform, and desired that it should be made the subject of to-day's discourse, asking especially that I should impress upon the poor contentment with their lot. The demand troubled me. Of the poor—the weak, helpless poor to whom the Master referred when he said, 'The poor ye have always with you'—I knew that very few, perhaps none, were to be found in this congregation. Why should I preach to the Rich of the duty of the Poor?

"Hearing that a strike was imminent, I felt impelled to return to the city. I already knew what Plusius thought. From childhood I have been familiar with his views. I thought it needful that I should know also what Penes felt. During the period that has intervened since the receipt of this letter I have tried to learn. I have led a poor man's life, in a poor man's home; but I have not learned much. The heart of a people is not an open book. The lens one uses in its study must be ground and fitted for the work. The whole truth cannot be gathered from statistical tables. One must feel as well as understand, before he can measure a wrong or appreciate the need for a remedy.

"I had prepared a sermon on the subject suggested, Labor and Capital. It did not please me. These terms, I now first realized, are only abstractions. God deals always with living forces. As I started to approach this desk I read the injunction the Church of the Golden Lilies has placed before the eyes of its pastors, 'Grant that thy servants may speak thy Word with all freedom.' So I have spoken my thought, showed some of the difficulties that becloud to-day's duty. I do not know exactly where the pathway of right-thinking and well-doing lies. I have found no absolute specific for human ills. I only know that there are ills for which no remedy has thus far been found, and I believe that somewhere the light of divine truth is shining clear and bright, and that if we follow the landmarks set up for our guidance, in the Master's words, we shall find it."

A prayer, a hymn, the benison of peace, and the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies wonderingly dispersed to their several homes.

CHAPTER V.

GARDEN SQUARE.

Garden Square, the park which was separated only by the width of a thoroughfare from the south front of the Church of the Golden Lilies, was probably so designated because it was neither a garden nor a square. It was, in fact, a pentagon, the shortest side of which abutted on the street that ran past the church and extended a little beyond the western boundary of the church property, where the edifice dropped from its stately height to the ivy-grown wing in which was the suite of rooms known as the pastor's study. The southward-looking windows of these rooms were of richly-stained glass, with one bright hexagonal pane of bevelled plate in the middle, the diamond-like edges of which flashed back the sunshine from their polished surfaces, until one wondered how enough got through to light so well the charmingly-arranged interior. The entrance to the study was at the southwestern angle, where a quaint ostium of unpolished sandstone hung over the steps that led down to the sidewalk, upon one side, and on the other, opened into the *porte cochère* which spanned the alley in the rear.

Though the Golden Lilies itself was a mountain of white marble, the pastor's study was of warm, rich sandstone, which not only formed a pleasant contrast, but marked the semi-private character of its occupancy. It was not a parsonage. The Church of the Golden Lilies did not degrade its pastor by putting him into a cast-iron ready-made home, and making him a tenant-at-will both of its parlor and its pulpit. It paid him his salary and allowed him to choose such lodging as he saw fit. This was only his official residence.

The park opposite was one of the institutions of the city. Some thought it a marvel of beauty; many regarded it almost as an excrescence. According to the view which was taken of it, people said a wise man's foresight or a foolish man's whim kept it what it was. It had been donated to the city upon certain explicit conditions. Among these were, that it should always be kept surrounded with a solid, hand-made iron fence seven feet high, having but three openings, one at each end of the western side of the pentagon, and one in the middle of the eastern side which stretched along the avenue. The gates were to be closed and locked at a certain hour every night, and not opened again until a specified hour in the morning. No buildings, poles, masts, statues, arches, fountains, flower-beds, or exotic plants or shrubs of any kind were to be permitted within its limits, but only native plants and trees were to grow there, and only gravelled walks of the precise form and dimensions stated in the deed were to be allowed. It was not to be crossed by any streets, alleys, footpaths, or highways, except those designated, and was to contain no structures except hand-made iron seats, each not more than six feet long, to be placed only along the sides of the paths. "More or less," as the lawyers say, these conditions had been observed, chiefly "less;" but still enough remained to render Garden Square unique among city parks.

Daniel Ximenes Valentine had been one of the richest men of the colony at the outbreak of the Revolution, when the great city was hardly more than one of the chain of villages that fringed the Atlantic coast line. At its close he had little left except his homestead on the outskirts of the city, his scientific tastes, and his faith in the new nation. The family residence had been at the south end of the park, while his estate included some hundreds of acres which the growing metropolis little by little absorbed. All lying to the eastward of the main street which ran by the lordly mansion was laid out in blocks with convenient thoroughfares, and sold at remunerative prices for residence purposes before the owner's death; but the park he had stubbornly refused either to sell or to permit streets to intersect. It was of the width and depth of two blocks, saving only a portion of the northwestern corner, which was cut off by an "Angling Road" which in the old time had led to a noted ferry upon the river a mile away.

The owner being an enthusiastic naturalist and an intense patriot, had set his heart on immortalizing himself, doing honor to his country, and conferring a lasting benefit upon the city whose future importance he fully realized, in his own way, to wit: by bequeathing to it a park to be devoted exclusively to "indigenes of the American continent," which he naturally supposed would be named after himself. This fact he did not take occasion to proclaim, but proceeded to inclose, beautify, and adorn the tract he had chosen as the one which should keep his memory green when the city should number her people by hundreds of thousands. From all parts of the country he gathered trees and shrubs and flowering plants, which he grouped with the consummate skill of the landscape gardener, to whose eyes the tree that is to be is visible, rather than the sapling which he plants.

To the Americans of that day, our native flora was a matter of little consequence. Our forests were yet too common to be esteemed. Their wonderful array of native trees and flowers and shrubs were regarded only as cumberers of the ground. Only those plants were thought worthy of cultivation on account of their beauty which were brought from abroad. We imported our flowers then, as well as our fashions. The daisy was nursed with care; the thistle regarded as a rarity. Box was the acme of decorative effect and hawthorn the only desirable hedge-plant. The patriotic owner of the yet undedicated botanical park would have none of these things. Trees of peculiar foliage or striking growths, plants of the most ordinary and sometimes noxious character, flowers that were found in every field, and vines that clambered along the hedge-rows—these he gathered with assiduous care, until, even before the scattered communities had crystallized into a nation—the plantation had several thousand varieties. These things his neighbors regarded with contempt, and referred to their collector with ridicule. Some of them complained that their grounds were injured by the seeds of noxious plants which the wind drove from his inclosure upon theirs; and by nearly all the denizens of the city which now boasts of his patriotism, learning, and sagacity, he was regarded as a selfish, fussy "crank"—whatever may have been the eighteenth-century synonym for that term—and "the largest collection of American plants and trees ever made" until a century afterward was unanimously voted an eyesore and a nuisance to the expanding city.

It happened that his neighbors on the west were gardeners—pushing, enterprising men who grew fruits and flowers and vegetables for profit instead of sentiment. While he was dreaming of honor for his country and fame for himself, they were scheming for present advantage. Beyond the Angling Road on the northwest, about midway of the tract he designed for the park, they established a public market, known to this day as Garden Market, and by legal process compelled the opening of two streets across this tract, one that which now ran past the church, and the other, two squares to the southward—in order to facilitate access to the same.

This naturally irritated the owner, to whom the park was as the apple of his eye, and who no doubt thought his charitable intent ought to outweigh any present inconvenience his neighbors might suffer. Besides, he was cut off by the street nearest his residence from that unrestricted freedom with which he had been accustomed to visit his favorite haunts. He was not a man to be defeated in his purposes, however. He had already spent a considerable sum in planting trees and shrubs in the part beyond the present limits, which lay between the Angling Road and the main street and which was known thereafter as the "Flat-iron Tract." The city authorities, annoyed no doubt by his captious opposition to the much-needed thoroughfares, in very despite, had named one of them Garden Street, and the other, which passed by his house, Blalock Lane—the latter after his enemies and the other advertising their business.

It was then that he set himself to devise a plan which should at once circumvent his neighbors and gratify his own aspiration. He inclosed the pentagon remaining with an iron picket-fence, laid out the paths, established the gates, and then offered it to the city upon conditions named in the deed. This deed included also a valuable portion of the river-front, one-half the income from which, it was provided, should be devoted to the care and improvement of the park; the other half to go to the city, after paying the State and county taxes on the Flat-iron Tract, which was to remain in common for a hundred years, and then pass to the nearest living descendant of the deceased; or, in default of such kinsman, to the city. Both tracts were to be forfeited upon any infraction of the conditions named in the deed. The park was to remain in the donor's control until his death; the moiety of the income from the river-front property was also to be expended under his direction. The gates were to be forever kept open during such portions of each day as he might designate, and a failure to keep them closed and secure during the remaining hours of each twenty-four, for ten consecutive days in any year, was to work a forfeiture of the bequest.

The gift was a very liberal one, and the donor at once became as popular as the previous conflict for a right of way across his land had made him unpopular. Even his enemies, the market gardeners, could not but admit that it was a very public-spirited thing to do, being very certain that it would inure to their advantage by adding to the value of property in that portion of the city, as well as by facilitating access to the market in which their produce was sold. One of them, therefore, moved in the City Council the acceptance of the gift and a formal vote of thanks to the donor. After the business had all been completed, and the deed of gift enrolled on parchment, executed in duplicate by both parties, as was the custom in those days, an ordinance was passed decreeing that the plat of ground thus conveyed and accepted should be forever known as Valentine Park. When all was done, the donor closed the gates and locked them against all comers, except when he chose to open them to the public. This occasioned no little dissatisfaction, but as the city was already deriving a handsome income from the dock property, the public concluded to put up with this invasion of what it deemed its rights until the donor's death, which, as he was already well advanced in years, could not be very far off.

When the old man died the city honored him as he well deserved, not only for this but for many other acts of liberality and patriotism. There was a great revulsion of sentiment, however, when it was learned that the hours fixed in his will for the opening and closing of the gates of the park were ten o'clock in the morning and five o'clock in the afternoon! It was generally believed that he had named these hours especially to disoblige his ancient enemies, the gardeners Blalock, by compelling their customers to go around instead of through the double square. The city had extended quite unexpectedly, too, in this direction, a great many poor people having bought homes upon the Angling Road and the streets that intersected it. All these were naturally indignant at the obstacles thrown across their path by the cranky and malicious dotard, who they believed had encumbered his gift with useless conditions merely to spite them.

As a result, the ordinance dedicating the odiously-conditioned inclosure, "Valentine Park," was rescinded, and the sovereignty of the people over the newly-received gift emphatically asserted by christening it Garden Square. A way was sought, too, of defeating the dead man's wish, and after many and divers consultations with those learned in the law, it was decided that the conditions of the gift would be sufficiently complied with if the gates of the park were opened and closed at the hours named in the will one day in each week, the donor having made its neglect for ten "consecutive days" the measure of non-compliance which should work a forfeiture. The watchman on this beat was, therefore, ordered to close the gates "every Seventh-day evening at five o'clock, and open them the First-day morning at ten of the clock, without fail." Thus, the malicious donor was circumvented, and the citizens enjoyed his liberality without observing the onerous conditions attached to the bequest.

The family of the donor, as is not infrequently the case with public benefactors, were left in very limited circumstances, and by and by dropped out of sight. Four-score years afterward, a lawyer employed to trace them out reported that there were no heirs in the male line, and that he had been unable to find any living representatives upon the female side. A daughter had given birth to a daughter, who had married somewhere at the West, after which no trace could be found of her or any descendants.

The park had been well kept up because of the fund provided for that purpose, not after the manner prescribed, however, and the gates had hardly been closed for fifty years. After the probable failure of lineal descendants was ascertained, little heed was paid to the conditions of the bequest. Why should there be? Only heirs could claim a forfeiture, and of them there were none left. The old walks were paved; new ones made; many of the indigenous trees were cut down and showy exotics substituted; a fountain was erected bearing the hated name of Blalock; a dozen telegraph poles supported a network of wires, to make way for which the donor's favorite trees were defaced and beheaded without scruple. Finally, a splendid group of tulip-trees, which he had planted with his own hands as a centre-piece, were cut down in order to afford a convenient location for an electric-light tower. Year by year the income from the dock property increased; year by year the park was "improved" by the expenditure of a moiety of this fund upon it, and year by year the people enjoyed the dead man's generosity in their own way. As for the Flat-iron Tract, it had long ago been built up with costly mansions. Though the city was required by the deed of gift to pay "the State and county taxes," nothing was said about municipal taxation. When, therefore, the city tax accrued against it, the tract was sold and bought in by the city, again and again. Finally the city, by advice of counsel, executed a quit claim to the premises for an inconsiderable sum, to an enterprising citizen, who sold it off in lots, giving warranty deeds under which the present occupants held.

Finally, it was proposed to open a thoroughfare through the middle of the park in order to enable a street-railway company to run their cars directly to their terminus, instead of having to make a detour of a block either way in order to pass the obstruction. There were scientific people who protested from time to time against the so-called "improvement" of the park as something almost sacrilegious, and now and then a musty lawyer, who hinted that the course the city had pursued was an outrageous breach of trust.

But the press laughed at such "old fogies," and pointed out how necessary it was that the changes should be made "both for the credit of the city and the comfort of the citizens." The city solicitor was, therefore, directed to proceed with certain formalities, preliminary to opening the proposed avenue, one of which was an advertisement for all parties interested in adjacent property, and the surviving heirs-at-law of certain parties having contingent interests which might be affected thereby, to come into court and show cause why the needed thoroughfare should not be established. The city solicitor's clerk, who was intrusted with the preparation of these advertisements, included among others, "the heirs of the body of Nancy Valentine Lott, daughter of Daniel Ximenes Valentine, dec'd, if any such there be."

It was this advertisement which had attracted the attention of Jonas Underwood.

CHAPTER VI.

GOLD AND PORPHYRY.

"HERE'S a good place, Hannah."

Jonas Underwood pressed through a hedge of arborvitæ as he spoke, into an unused path in Garden Square, and pointed with the black cane he carried toward a seat almost hidden under a dense cluster of low-branching Nyassa, that had grown up about the stump of a giant progenitor, against the bole of which the back of the iron seat had once rested.

"Looks as if it had been forgot, doesn't it?" he added in his wheezy tones, as he parted the branches so that his wife might walk under them and then seated himself by her side. "Couldn't have suited us better if it had been made on purpose, could it, Hannah?" he continued gleefully, moving his feet about in the heap of rustling leaves which had lodged against the bench, and looking up at the painted foliage through which the sun glanced warmly down upon them. "With that hedge in front, the woodbine clambering over the high railing, the big cedar on one side and dense balsam on the other, we're almost as much alone here in the corner of the park as if we were in the heart of a forest. Here we've got a peep-hole on the avenue and there on the side street. We haven't a very good view of the church, but we can hear the music, see the people coming and going, and get a glimpse of the minister when he slips into that queer coop at the back corner of the church. I wonder how I came to spy such a cosey nook. I don't suppose one in a thousand going along the walk there would think of finding such a thing as a bench in this bunch of young gums. I guess it's the force of habit—the habit of seeing things hid under the bushes—the habit of boyhood. One that grows up in the woods never quite gets over the instincts of an Indian. I never expected to see a gum-tree again," he added, crushing one of the resinous leaves in his hand and snuffing at it eagerly.

The wife placed the basket she carried on the seat between them, glancing quickly around as if to detect any harmful exposure.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid, Hannah. There isn't a breath of wind can touch us here, and when the sun gets up a little higher, it'll shine in on us between the branches up there for a little while, and then those on the other side will shut it off before it gets too hot. It's a pity we're not in front of the church, where we could see the great window. When the light is just right I think it's the grandest thing I ever saw. It's just my idea of 'the Christ.'"

Despite the huskiness of his tones, the man's voice was eager and his utterance rapid. The light in his eyes showed the poet in his nature, which a life of unusually depressing character had not been able wholly to eradicate.

"I think it is horrid," said the wife with a shudder. "I don't see why any one should want to think about the crucifixion. I never see a painting of it without a shiver. It seems to me that the way it is treated in the Gospels is the best—there is so little said about it, you know."

"Perhaps that is the reason I like this picture in the window of the Golden Lilies," answered the husband. "The ghastliness of the crucifixion sickens me. To extol it, or to dwell upon its horrors, seems to me to be emphasizing the least divine element of Christ's character. I cannot think of *him* as overcome by physical pain, wrung with mere agony of the flesh. Such a nature could submit to death because it was the law of the existence he had assumed, but he never grew weak with its agony, never surrendered to its wofulness. The physical torture of the cross was nothing—to him. Such a soul as his would have smiled at its pains. To him the pain of crucifixion must have been trivial in comparison with that dark hour in Gethsemane. The cross is merely the climax of fleshly woe which could not have been anything very terrible to such an exalted nature. His servants have often sung amid the flames; be sure he did not exhibit any sign of agony in the hour of death. He did not drag and moan and faint with physical suffering. His enemies did not exult in the failure of his fortitude. He did not 'hang' on the cross. The term is misapplied when referring to the Christ. He was lifted up on it, as he foretold that he would be. They taunted him; bade him release himself; but never once pitied or despised him. He was upright and smiling and calm until the end came. Then he 'bowed his head'—bowed it forward, you see; he had held it upright until then—and said: 'It is finished!' Then the *dead body*, indeed, 'hung' upon the cross, relaxed and ghastly; but that was not the Christ—not *my* Christ! He not only conquered death, but had already conquered pain. I could not worship one whose nature could be overcome by physical suffering."

He paused to cough, with a sort of vehemence which seemed to resent even this concession to physical weakness. The wife, who had learned to pay no attention to his paroxysms, thought how like he was to the Christ he described, in his silent endurance of pain that would have broken the spirit of most men.

"I suppose that is why I like this Christ up there," he pointed over his shoulder with the crook of his staff as he continued. "Only a part of the cross is shown. The artist's idea probably was to express that patient pitifulness which seems to be the artistic ideal of the Christ—as one that endures pain indeed, but advertises the fact of endurance as if he would solicit the pity of mankind. Fortunately, the proportions are heroic; the head is erect; the lilies almost hide the thorns; and by some witchery, due to the glass, I suppose, more than to the drawing, the lines meant to express suffering show only a sort of softened, regal scorn. It is as if he smiled down upon his enemies, pitying their futile efforts to torture and degrade, but too strong to care for their taunts, too Godlike to vaunt his own strength!"

The bells had begun to ring while he spoke, and the tremor of their vibrations shook the sun-lighted leaves above them. Crowds were hurrying across the park, along the avenue, up and down the intersecting street, but these two were alone in a temple "not made with hands," talking of the Christ, forgetful of their own woes as he had been of earthly agony.

"I wonder," said the woman thoughtfully as the sound of the bells died away, "what would have been the consequence if your idea of the Christ had been the accepted one, instead of the meek, pitiful ideal you so—so dislike?"

"Don't say 'dislike,' Hannah," exclaimed the man passionately. "I hate it! It makes the Christ a weak, snivelling, lachrymose beggar, instead of a being stronger and nobler than any man! It is the badge of unconscious servitude, the ideal of men who suffered oppression and dared not resist. The suffering of Christ has been magnified to induce men to endure curable evils—to accept, with what we call Christian submission, what such a Christ as mine would count it a shame not to resist. Did you ever think how little show of weakness there was about him? More than half his words are denunciations of evil, and always of evil in high places. I like to think of him bearding the Scribes and Pharisees, and lashing the money-changers out of the temple! He wept twice—once for the weakness of his friends and once for Jerusalem. The event was so startling that the Evangelist makes a special note of it. So pitiful was the grief of the sisters, so terrible the impending fate of the holy city, that *even* Jesus wept! That is the idea—Jesus the strong, the imperturbable, the unassailable, the being of incomparable fortitude—even *he* wept! He was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' but he was not given to tears. What would have been the result if this idea of the Christ had prevailed from the beginning? *There* is one thing that would be different," he pointed to the now thronged sidewalk—"there wouldn't be three women to one man going to church!"

"I don't know but that is so," said the wife musingly.

"There is no question about it," was the positive reply. "There's another thing that would be changed, too," jerking his thumb over his shoulder toward the great church, whose bells were again beginning to sound: "the big churches would be built *down*-town instead of *up*-town, to accommodate weak souls and tired bodies and slender purses instead of bank accounts!"

"But the rich have souls, you must remember, Jonas, as well as the poor," said the wife chidingly.

"Every rich man saved in that way means a score of poor men sent to hell!" answered the husband fiercely. "What is it? Just building a wall of partition in God's house—nay, making God's house itself the partition. Giving the rich the choice cuts and the poor the crumbs and scraps from the Lord's table. It is running away from the devil because God's saints are afraid of having their clothes soiled or their eyes or nostrils offended by proximity to the wicked. Do you remember the reason that church yonder was moved up here? It seems but yesterday that I read it in the newspapers. The region where the old one stood was growing so sinful and wicked, they said, that the congregation were greatly annoyed in going back and forth from the service! *My* Christ, the only Christ *a man* ought to worship, would have said, '*That* is the very place to plant my church!' And no one was ever rich enough to dare demur to such a Christ's command. Obedience or rebellion would be the only alternatives. Obey his behests or leave his church! And the church would be stronger to-day if it carried fewer ornaments. The church is for the poor, the weak. The rich can take care of themselves! They moved the church up here simply because the Christ of the whipcords has been forgotten, and a namby-pamby creature that dare not look a rich man in the face exalted in his stead!"

"There, there, Jonas," said the wife soothingly, "don't get excited. It seems as if you must be right, but there isn't much hope that your ideal will ever be accepted."

"I suppose not—I suppose not," Underwood responded wearily.

His excitement had taken away his strength, and he was again seized with one of those fits of coughing which racked his frame so terribly. In the midst of this paroxysm his face suddenly lighted, and he pointed unsteadily toward the opening in the clustering woodbine, through which the entrance to the pastor's study was visible. The wife looked and saw a young man pass up the steps. The husband seemed absent-minded and subdued after the fit of coughing was over.

"I oughtn't to have said that, Hannah," he said at length. His voice trembled and he spoke very humbly now. "I oughtn't to have said it. I don't take much stock in the human end of Christianity, dear, and no doubt often shock you by the way I speak about it; but I don't often doubt its divine head or its divine mission. Yes, Hannah, I *do* believe the time is coming when my ideal will be accepted—in God's time, not in mine. I wish we could go to church," he added, wistfully glancing toward the Golden Lilies.

"What, there, Jonas?" exclaimed the wife. "I'm afraid we'd not be very welcome!" She looked down at her faded shawl as she spoke.

"Yes, we would, dear," he answered eagerly, "and it might do somebody good——"

His cough interrupted him.

"Aren't you afraid you'd disturb the congregation?" she asked.

"Perhaps I should—perhaps I should," he said submissively, when he could control his voice. His red lip showed tremulous beneath the dark mustache and a tear stole down his cheek.

The bells had ceased, and the notes of the organ flowed forth like golden waves through the sun-lighted air. Jonas

Underwood closed his eyes and listened. His wife watched him narrowly. When the opening services were finished and the sermon had evidently begun, he opened his eyes and met her anxious look.

"I feel better now," he said. "That rested me."

"Have you found what you came here for, Jonas?" asked the wife after a long silence, desiring to divert his attention from the subject which seemed to excite him too much for his own good.

"No; I haven't found it," he answered carelessly.

"What did you expect?"

"I don't know as I really *expected* anything. I didn't know but this might be a park my great-grandfather gave to the city—at least that's what I've heard. I don't know what its name was, nor where it was; but I've heard that the conditions of the deed were that it should never have any walks in it only those he laid out, and they made the initial letters of his name. I've seen my mother mark them out plenty of times. He meant it for a sort of monument, you know. Let me see—the initials were 'D. X. V.,' and the paths made a monogram like this."

The man brushed away the leaves with the end of his cane and traced a design in the damp, loose gravel.

"And if you had found this was the place?" asked the wife with a trace of eagerness in her tone.

"I should have gone into court and told them they mustn't spoil the old man's monogram," he answered simply.

"Oh!"

There was a world of disappointment in the wearily-uttered monosyllable. Her husband noticed it and looked at her keenly for some seconds.

"So?" he said with a low, meditative sibilation. "I never thought of that, Hannah. Perhaps the matter may be worth looking after."

CHAPTER VII.

TAKING THE VERDICT.

Murvale Eastman, in the sermon which had startled the congregation of the Golden Lilies, had spoken less from impulse than he imagined. He did not covet the rôle of reformer, did not deem himself wiser or better than others, and would have stood aghast at the thought of proposing any serious modification of the Christian ideal or any material change in social forms and methods.

Yet in its own mysterious way, the Power which rules all things had long been fitting him to pursue the very line of thought which he believed a particular event had awakened. Like all knowledge worthy of the man, his conviction of the paramount importance of the subject he had so crudely outlined to his congregation was an evolution, an unconscious growth, rather than an intended and conscious conclusion. He had not argued with himself; he had not studied theories except from the mere desire to know the thoughts of others, not from any hope of finding in them a specific remedy. The statements of conditions which he found in the works of social philosophers and professional reformers had interested him greatly. He seemed to find in all of them, religious, political, and even anarchistic disquisitions upon existing conditions, some things which his own observation and experience confirmed. But when he came to the remedies proposed, the best seemed unsatisfactory. Some awakened his pity, very many his contempt, and a few his anger.

A man of vigorous qualities of body and mind, both fate and inclination had thrown him much in the way of other men, not as a mere observer, but in close companionship with different classes in widely distant localities. He had lived among the crowded factory toilers of the East long enough to understand their thought; he had come to comprehend the dual existence of the miner which touches the world's interests most nearly when separated most completely from it. The weird pathos of that gnomic life had made an impression upon him, which it needed the breadth and sunshine of the great West to remove. Here again he had met the problems of a new and wonderful civilization staring him in the face, and his mind had gone backward along the path of history seeking to learn what message it had to give of analogous or similar conditions.

There are two ways of studying history. The one is to find somebody who has or professes to have ability to unravel all its mysteries, and accept his guidance, adopt his theories—so far as they are comprehensible—and become a champion of his hypotheses. It is a poor sort of knowledge, but better than none, and is the kind that those who are called "students of history" usually possess. Another way is to master the facts so far as may be without exhaustive balancing of detail, and form, fill out, and complete the picture of an epoch, feel its life and discover its significance. History is never a trustworthy guide to the thinker. It is, at the best, only a staff, and a most unreliable one at that. Despite the well-known adage, it never repeats itself. The butterfly of to-day can never again be the chrysalid of yesterday. Analogies the past may furnish, but patterns for the future never. And the analogies, to be of value, must not depend on similarities of soil, of climate, of food and drink; nor yet on governmental forms or methods. Man is something more than an animal, and climatic conditions do not fix his character. So, too, he is something more than farmer, mechanic, or trader, and no rule of progress can be drawn from statistics of wages and profits. He is something more, too, than subject or citizen, and the form of government which in one age means tyranny may in the next offer the largest liberty.

The truths of history which are valuable are those pertaining to *individual conditions*, and these are nearly all relative. What the laborer of yesterday earned is an insignificant fact when compared with the farther inquiry, What was the relation of his income to the general average of attainable comfort of his day? So, too, the question of who owns the land of a country is of less importance than who derives benefit from it. Again, the form of government is unimportant in comparison with the general protection, prosperity, and happiness which result from it. The lessons of the past, therefore, are those of *relative conditions*. Necessity and habitual reliance on his own conclusions had led Murvale Eastman to an unconscious apprehension of these truths. From Plato's day until the present, he had noted the absolute failure of the most brilliant schemes of society and government which treat men as a fixed quantity, to be governed always by the same motives and controlled by the same influences.

Naturally enough, he fell to comparing the Christian idea as he understood it with these proposed systems of government and society, and in so doing was more and more struck with its wisdom and simplicity in dealing, not with methods, but with men; not with theories, but with individuals; not with conditions, but with motives.

Individuals and motives—these are the only static forces in society. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," is a universally beneficent principle, subject to no variation because of age, condition, race, or clime. Whatever government, form of society, or economic condition promotes the practical application of this idea is good; whatever hinders it is bad. This was Murvale Eastman's philosophy. It went no farther. He would care for To-day, and not try to put a yoke upon To-morrow.

He was by nature and training a conservative. He believed that civilization was an eternal approximation to the highest ideal in manhood and womanhood. He did not think society ought to be torn down because it was not perfect; he did not expect human nature to be radically changed by a political experiment, or believe that evil would be obliterated by a single spasm of virtue. He had no specific for the cure of wrong, nor did he anticipate a millennial condition to follow the adoption of a pet idea. He thought, as he turned from his desk and made his way back to his study, after he had preached of Plusius and Penes, that he had been very moderate both in language and suggestion, but he knew that moderation was no shield against animosity. He did not wish to assail the church, but to strengthen and uphold it. To his mind, the church was the mainspring of civilization. He did not wish to remove it or substitute anything else for it. He only thought the action of the spring might be rendered more effectual and its results be made more beneficent.

He knew, however, that he was liable to be misconceived, and might be classed among the "visionaries" and "cranks" who would tear society down in order to build it up anew. He hoped by going back to common ground and laying his course by Christian landmarks, to command the sympathy of his people and avoid the usual fate of the theoretical reformer. He had forgotten that he who takes up the sword of controversy must conquer with it, or be cast out and stoned for his presumption. He was not easily frightened, however. He liked approval and loved his people; but he loved the right better than commendation, and humanity better than any man's opinion

He was not willing merely to *be* right; he wished to benefit others by inducing them to *do* right. It is little credit to know what is the right thing to be done; the real triumph of the thinker is to induce others to act upon his conclusions. Very often of late he had thought of Erasmus, the great scholar, and Martin Luther, the humble priest. Erasmus saw the church's error and corruption just as clearly as Luther, but he feared to imperil the good it embodied by boldly attacking the evil it contained. Luther was not afraid that the overthrow of evil would imperil what was truly good. Now, Luther is accounted a saint and a hero by half the Christian world; Erasmus, a coward and a malingerer by the whole of it. He thought "silence better than schism." He was wrong; such men are always wrong when silence means surrender. Murvale Eastman saw this, and asked himself uneasily whether the present was the time for an Erasmus or a Luther. He did not imagine himself able to be a Luther if there were need, and he much preferred to be an Erasmus. But if not a hero he was no coward. If he could not induce the Church of the Golden Lilies to accept his views, he would find some other way to do the work assigned him.

He would not be a schismatic—that he had determined. That the church was wrong, he did not doubt—not in doctrine, but in method; but it did not at all follow that he was called to set it right, or that it could be set right in his way. Perhaps the thought he had in mind was not one for the church to carry into effect. He believed it was, but he might be in error. At any rate, he must give himself to it. If the church would not follow him he must undertake the work alone. The thought was a terrible one to a mind like Murvale Eastman's. He loved the church, had been reared to venerate its doctrines, and had dedicated his life to its service. He loved his people; knew their thoughts; appreciated their excellences; excused their foibles, and keenly felt the honor they had conferred upon him in making him their pastor. To sever that relation was to destroy all future prospects in his profession. It might even make him poor. The relative whose wealth he had expected from childhood to inherit, might take the same view of his action as the congregation of the Golden Lilies. If he succeeded, he would still be the Reverend Murvale Eastman; if he failed, he would be—what? Murvale Eastman, workman? He did not see anything else. Yet he had decided—not, indeed, until the last moment—but fully decided, before the morning service began. He came down from the platform when it was over, to face the verdict. It was rendered without delay.

It was the custom of the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies, especially its most active and influential members, to find their way to the pastor's study after the morning service. On such occasions as the present, after the summer vacation, there was a sort of impromptu reception, including almost the whole body of his hearers.

Coming in at the door upon the right, they passed out at the one upon the left, shaking hands and exchanging a word of greeting as they passed by. The young pastor took his accustomed place beside the table and awaited the usual ovation. An usher opened the door, while the organ pealed its harmonious farewell to the dispersing multitude.

A group of children came bounding in, on their way to the Sabbath-school, as soon as the door was opened. He was a favorite with children, and the warmth of their greeting moved him almost to tears. A few of the congregation followed them—some timidly, some curiously. A couple of women who had known better days, and found it hard to hide the bitterness of poverty, came to thank him, heartily but hopelessly. They never expected to be thought as well of in poverty as they had been when rich. A gruff-voiced stranger came to say he admired the minister's courage, but was afraid he had "bitten off more than he could chew." He desired to leave his card, and requested that he might be notified whenever aid was required. Two young men and a young woman with note-books insisted on asking questions, which showed that if they had not comprehended the sermon, they at least scented a sensation. They were reporters who wanted the use of the preacher's manuscript, as has come to be the custom, in their reports. They were in despair when they learned that the sermon was not in manuscript—all but one: he had taken it down in shorthand and foresaw a profitable "scoop." A jolly friend who admired Murvale Eastman in the role of yachtsman quite as much as in that of pastor, greeted him with a hearty hand-grip, exclaiming:

"Well, you *have* shaken out your jags, haven't you?"

"What do you think would become of the church if the rich should stop giving it money?" asked a portly matron with a scornful flash of her black eyes.

"What good would it do if we should give up what we have?" said another sneeringly. "It would just make more poor, and who would there be to help us if there were no rich churches?"

Among those who did not come to greet the pastor was Mr. Wilton Kishu. Never before had he failed to extend this courtesy to the pastor of the Golden Lilies when he had been present at the morning service. Some of the official members came, but their greetings were constrained and formal.

Murvale Eastman answered them all, some pleasantly, some seriously. When the meagre procession was ended he closed the door and sat down to think. The verdict had been rendered and was unmistakable. The Church of the Golden Lilies would not follow their pastor, nor indorse the views he had expressed, or intimated rather. Should he submit to the verdict or take an appeal? follow Erasmus or Luther? Whatever he might decide to do, the look upon his face showed that he was not likely to forego his purpose because of one rebuff.

While he sat and thought, he had been picking with his nails at the palm, first of one hand and then of the other, as they lay upon the table before him. He smiled as he became conscious of what he was doing, and turned his palms upward to the light. Their wonted whiteness was marred by dark, hard callouses.

"I wonder if I have learned enough to pay for the smart they cost?" he asked himself with grim humor. "I was not compelled to labor with my hands. It was only a freak, a fancy, like a yacht-trip to the Arctic Sea.

The temporary discomfort but made the luxury of ease and abundance more thoroughly appreciable. I wonder how I should feel if compelled to earn my daily bread in this manner. That is the test of duty."

He spoke good-naturedly, but his very quietude showed that he would fight. Any one who had seen his face settle into grim repose as he took out his knife and continued to pick at the callosities on his palm would have known that he did it unconsciously, but that in the mean time his mind was busy on a plan of campaign. Murvale Eastman was going to fight, not outside the church, but in it; the Gibraltar in which he would make his stand was the pulpit of the Golden Lilies, from which he had been duly commissioned to expound the word and declare the will of God.

A smile came to his lips as he reached this conclusion. He closed his knife with a snap, dropped it in his pocket, and stepped to the window. He seemed waiting for some expected thing to happen. How beautiful were the maples in their foliage of golden light against the dark evergreens in the park across the street! The sun shone down through them with a steady, even glow which was in harmony with his feeling. What was the woman doing there under the trees? She seemed to be greatly disturbed—gesticulating frantically with her faded parasol. Perhaps she was in distress? The pastor's heart was very accessible to the thought of need just at that moment. He was like a knight-errant setting out in search, not of adventure, but of opportunity to do his devoir for the weak.

As Murvale Eastman made these observations, he had been tearing into little bits the sermon he had prepared so carefully and now would never deliver. There came a tap at the study door. His face lighted up as he heard it. He dropped the fragments of paper and went quickly to open the door.

"Come in," he said in a glad, tender tone.

His countenance lost its look of rapture as his eyes fell upon his visitor. A woman dressed in mourning, leading by the hand a child of five or six years, stood upon the threshold.

"Come in, madam, pray come in," he said in an altered tone, but still cordially, at the same time extending his hand. The woman noted the change, but placed her hand in his and entered. They advanced toward the table. The door swung half-shut behind them.

"You did not expect *me?*" she said.

"No; but I am glad to see you."

"Really?"

"Truly."

"Yet my coming may mean trouble?" she said with a look of significant inquiry.

"Very probably."

"At a time when you will need all your friends, too?"

"Trouble never comes at a convenient season," said the minister with a quiet smile.

The woman smiled back at him, pleasantly and familiarly.

"Thanks; but I cannot understand why you should be glad to see me just now?"

"It is a long story; if you will permit me to call——"

"Certainly, but—would it be—— You know my position—and—and you——"

"I am the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies," said Murvale Eastman, replying to her hesitation, with a touch of pride in his voice. "What a Christian gentleman may properly do, I am not to be forbidden. If you tell me there is any reason——"

"Oh, no!" she said, interrupting, with a flush on her cheek, "of course there is no *reason.*"

"I would have staked my life on it," said the pastor earnestly.

"You are very kind," answered the woman simply, her dark eyes lighting up with pleasure. "I only wished to save you from annoyance."

"It is you who are kind," he said with a bow. "When may I come?"

"Any day—after to-morrow."

"And where shall I find you, Mrs. Merton?" taking out his note-book.

The woman flushed as he spoke the name.

"After to-morrow I shall be—there."

She opened her hymn-book and handed him a card. He raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

"You are going to——"

"Assert my right," said the woman firmly.

The child, who carried her parasol, had been holding sometimes the woman's hand and sometimes the long crape veil which hung over her shoulder, during this conversation. Evidently the man and his surroundings had little interest for her. "Come," she whispered, pulling at her mother's arm.

"This is my daughter, Clara," said the woman, as if in response at once to the child's insistence and a question she read in the pastor's eyes.

The minister took the child's hand.

"She has grown since I saw her," he said. "Will she attend the Sabbath-school?"

"I wish she might," said the mother wistfully.

"I will go with you now to Mr. Hanson, the superintendent. I am sure he—I mean, I shall be glad to introduce you."

"Oh, no, not now—please," said the lady almost piteously, drawing the child away as she spoke.

"Very well; any time," said the pastor with decision. "I'll call on Tuesday, then, at ten o'clock, if the hour is convenient."

The lady bowed and half-turned to go.

"You recognized me at once," she said, halting and looking backward. She was a beautiful woman, and the position showed her attractions to the best advantage to one looking in at the door.

"I expected you."

"But not just then?" she asked archly.

"Perhaps not," he answered with a smile.

"You were not surprised, however?"

"I saw you in the congregation."

"You must have good eyes and a good memory to pick out one you have not seen in so many years among so many!"

"I was looking for you."

"You knew I was in the city, then?"

"I expected you would be about this time."

There was a peculiar significance in his tone.

"Then it was you who put the advertisement in the *Herald?*"

She turned back and offered him her hand impulsively.

"I wished to prevent a crime," said the minister gravely, "and hoped I might do some good. Besides, I am greatly your debtor."

"Oh, that is outlawed," she said lightly.

"But I have another obligation, if that were waived."

"Indeed! What is that?"

"I will tell you when I come to call."

"Well, I will give orders that you be admitted," she said. "I suppose there will be a—a great commotion," she added.

"No doubt. You have my sympathy."

"You are a brave man."

The lady looked up in the young minister's face with evident admiration.

"Thanks," said he with a quiet smile. "You ought to be a judge of the article. It is not so common a quality, either. I was just thinking myself an arrant coward."

"You will need all the courage you have, I should say," she continued, not noticing his allusion to herself.

"No doubt."

"I wish I could help you." The words were heartily spoken, as one might address a brother.

"*N'importe*," with a shrug. "You will have need for a good deal of the same thing yourself, I think."

"Oh, a woman is always braver than a man—in such ways, I mean. Besides, I have Clara, and am willing to suffer anything for her sake. You are right and deserve to succeed, but you will have a hard fight. God help you!"

"Heaven help us both," he said reverently.

They had moved gradually toward the door. He held it open, bowed low, and the woman and child passed out. As they did so the bell rang and there was a loud knocking at the outer door of the study. He hastened to open it.

"If you please, sir," said a pale youth who stood on the threshold, "there's a man dying over there in the square who wants——"

The minister snatched up his hat and followed the messenger without a word

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONSECRATED CUP.

A FEW moments after the pastor left it, a little procession entered the door of the study, bearing among them the form of Jonas Underwood. The young minister had impressed some of the passers-by into the service of humanity and brought the unconscious man to the first refuge that occurred to him.

The sufferer's eyes were closed, the face pallid as death, and a little stream of blood was oozing from one corner of his mouth. He was breathing softly but weakly, and there were drops of sweat upon his brow and stains of blood upon his face. By direction of the minister, he was placed on a broad, low couch, and one of those who had assisted him hurried off for a physician. Mrs. Underwood, despite her very natural alarm, laid her parasol and the lunch-basket she carried carefully upon the table before giving her attention to her husband. This done she asked for water, and began her ministrations with that instinctive deftness and entire self-forgetfulness which characterize a woman accustomed to trying scenes. There was no haste, no trepidation, no shrinking from the prospect of imminent dissolution, as she knelt beside the couch and bathed her husband's face. After a time a little flush came into the pallid cheek; then the eyes opened. For a moment the man seemed dazed at the unfamiliar surroundings. Then catching his wife's eye he smiled, struggled with the obstruction in his throat, and said in a reassuring whisper:

"I've—got—it—up!"

He raised his right hand, in which a blood-stained handkerchief was tightly clenched, and gazed meaningly toward it:

"I understand, Jonas," said his wife calmly. "You mean that you have gotten rid of what has hurt you so long."

His face lighted up with a smile, but when he attempted to speak the red, frothy blood bubbled through his lips and he swooned again. But the heavy-knuckled right hand still clutched the handkerchief. The minister brought towels and fresh water from his private apartment and offered what assistance he could.

"If we only had some restorative," sighed the wife when the man was once more breathing regularly but feebly.

Murvale Eastman put down the bowl he was holding, took a key from his pocket, opened the door of an adjoining room, and soon returned carrying a heavy gold-lined silver goblet half-full of dark, rich wine, the fragrance of which filled the room. The woman raised her eyes inquiringly to him as he handed it to her.

"Yes," he answered solemnly, "the blood shed for the healing of the nations."

He lifted the man's head very gently as he spoke, while the wife held the goblet to his lips. Then the pastor folded his elegant fall overcoat so that its silken lining was uppermost, and placed it under the head, as if apprehensive that the cylindrical leathern pillow of the couch might not be comfortable. After a moment they gave more of the wine, moving him very gently. He breathed more easily, but his eyes remained closed. The wife put the goblet on the floor and began chafing his hands. She tried to remove the handkerchief, but the muscles grew more tense when she did so and there was an impatient gesture which warned her to desist.

In a short time the physician came, a quiet, alert man, who greeted the pastor in that gentle undertone which is habitual with the profession, and removing his hat and gloves turned his attention at once to his patient; felt his forehead, touched his wrist, noted the blood-stained towels, glanced approvingly at the goblet of wine, listened to the story of the seizure and hemorrhage in the park, and said to the minister in a tone of earnest commendation:

"Your promptness gave him a chance for life. He is fortunate in having been stricken in sight of your windows."

A flush came to the young pastor's face as he replied:

"I did only my duty."

"But you *did* it," said the physician warmly. "That is the point, did it promptly and without regard to possible objection or questioning as to others' scruples. More of your sort would incline us who are mere materialists to respect Christianity if we cannot believe its doctrines. I would not touch that goblet now for anything, lest it should hurt your feelings, but I think you sanctified it when you placed it to this man's lips beyond what any form of word-consecration could do. He might possibly have lived without it, but it was exactly the gentle stimulant he needed to prevent him from sinking after the hemorrhage, and has greatly improved his chances. It is a pity he should have to be removed immediately."

"Why should he be?" asked the minister.

The physician cast his eyes about the room significantly and shrugged his shoulders. He had been holding his patient's hand and watching his countenance narrowly as he spoke.

"How did your husband come to be in this condition, madam?" he asked, turning toward the wife as if nothing more need be said about the question of removal.

"He is the man who was pulled from his car when the strikers attacked it at the corner of Vane and Delaware streets a few weeks ago," answered the minister before the woman could reply. "He was dragged about the streets and very badly hurt."

"Yes?" said the physician with a puzzled frown upon his brow.

Mrs. Underwood looked up at the speaker in surprise. He turned his face away as he caught her eye.

"But this is no new thing; he must have been ill before?" said the doctor.

"Yes, sir; a long time, but never quite so bad," answered the wife. She had risen from her knees when the physician came and was now sitting stiffly on the edge of a great arm-chair the minister had wheeled beside the couch for her, holding the clenched right hand of her husband. She told then, partly in her own way and partly in response to the doctor's questions, the story of her husband's illness and his curious delusion in regard to its cause.

"He says he's got it up, doctor," she added, but in a tone utterly lacking any sign of belief in the statement she repeated.

The sick man's eyes opened and fixed themselves on the physician's; he raised his right hand slowly and let it fall toward the medical man, the fingers relaxing about the handkerchief as he did so.

"What?" asked the physician, quick to interpret the looks and acts of those under his care. "You think it is there?"

The man's face lighted up; and nodding his head slightly but affirmatively, he said in a harsh whisper:

"Know 't is."

"Keep still! Don't stir! Don't try to speak!" said the physician with quiet imperiousness.

It was too late. The exertion brought on a paroxysm of coughing, and the red tide was soon pouring again over the man's lips. When its violence had been checked and another sip of the wine administered, the physician said after a moment's thought:

"Well, now, let us see about this 'thing' of yours."

He took the handkerchief, which was surrendered willingly, and with a significant look toward the minister, retired with him to the lavatory.

"See here, dominie," he said as soon as they were alone together, "you have some peculiar interest in this case?"

"Well—perhaps—" hesitatingly, "—yes, I suppose I have."

"That is enough. I don't want to know what it is, and haven't time to hear if I did. If he could remain where he is a day or two he might get well; perhaps about as he was before. If he is removed now he will die before he gets to the hospital."

"He must not be removed, then," said the minister emphatically.

"But your services?"

"Nothing but the organ can be heard here, and that can be dispensed with if necessary."

"If not too loud it might soothe and quiet him. I will ask his wife about that. I suppose I shall have to lie to him."

"Why so?"

"Oh, don't be troubled," answered the physician with a smile. "We doctors have to minister to minds diseased as well as you, but we are not so restricted in our range of remedies. We administer truth or falsehood, just as we find the patient's condition to require."

"This man seems like one who could bear the truth," said the other pleasantly.

"Bear it! He could *bear* anything. He is one of those men who would bear the rack without flinching. The question is not what he can bear, but on what would he thrive most heartily. Now, his idea that there was a foreign substance in the lung is no doubt a delusion, but one which it might be fatal to dispel. He has probably not long to live, though it is possible, if hemorrhage can be prevented, that he may last several months—possibly a year or two; but if he should be convinced that there was nothing in this notion of his, he would probably give up all hope and just die out of hand, almost as if stabbed to the heart."

"I see," said the minister musingly.

"I thought I would tell you," continued the physician apologetically. "Of course I shall have to look for this foreign substance, which he thinks is in the handkerchief here, and equally of course I am going to find it. As your countenance might betray you, I hope you will not remain where he can see you while I am telling him about it. He watches your face like a dog, anyhow. What have you been doing to him?"

The physician had pushed up his sleeves and placed the handkerchief in the basin while he spoke, and now without waiting for an answer he turned on the hot water. Though he did not at all believe in his patient's idea, the habit of doing things well made him watchful and thorough. He separated the adhering parts of the coarse linen with the utmost care. All at once he started; held something up to the light; whipped a small lens out of his pocket; opened it with a touch of his forefinger and examined his discovery with interest.

"I guess, dominie," he said with his eyes still glued to the object he was holding toward the light, "I guess you won't have to hide while I am making my report. If the man isn't right about the thing that troubled him, I am greatly mistaken. Just look at that, will you?"

He handed the other the glass and extended toward him the hand holding the object of his scrutiny.

"What do you think that is?"

"It looks like a piece of bone," answered the minister thoughtfully.

"And *is* a piece of lead, a long, narrow piece, not heavy enough to make its way downward through the lung, and too jagged to become encysted in matter so unstable, which his fall over the bench in the park probably loosened so that the paroxysm threw it up."

He held the substance to the light again, scanning it keenly through the glass, the minister peering curiously over his shoulder.

"You see it is lead plainly enough," he said, gashing it with his thumb-nail, showing the bright metallic cleavage. "It's a curiously-shaped piece, but there is no knowing what forms lead will not assume when it is thrown with force enough against the human body. That, now, is a segment from the base of a conical bullet, a sort of a subcontrary section too, I should say, though I have nearly forgotten my mathematics. The man has certainly got the better of the examiners this time. But it is so common a thing for our profession to be wrong that we don't mind it. That's where you have the advantage of us," he added quizzingly as he held the bit of metal under the open faucet and looked smilingly up at the minister. "You gentlemen are never wrong—can't be, you know—and if you were, you wouldn't dare own it. I declare, I hardly know whether to envy or pity you."

"Perhaps we deserve both," said the divine gravely.

"I'm not sure you do not," returned the physician. "I'd give anything for the power to believe as you do, and yet I am almost certain I should pity myself if I did. Now, you would probably call this discovery 'providential.' To me it is only the result of fixed laws."

He was scanning the bit of metal again as he spoke.

"And may not Providence act through fixed laws as well as in contravention of them?" asked the divine.

"Perhaps," answered the physician absently. "See here, dominie," he continued after a moment, "won't you just take this glass and tell me what you see on the under side of that bit of lead?"

"It looks like a letter C," replied the other, after a moment's scrutiny.

"And to the right of that?"

"It seems like the upper curve of the letter S."

"And that's just what it is," exclaimed the physician, his eyes sparkling with delight. "That is a witness which sustains the truth of that man's story and will compel the amendment of the record which has depressed and dragged him down so long."

"You think he will recover?"

"Oh, I don't know about that, but if he lives an hour it will be the happiest hour of his life. Dominie," he said, turning and laying his hand impressively on the other's shoulder, "if you ever *should* be inclined to doubt what you now believe, think of this chain of little insignificant events which has saved a man's honor, which he counts dearer than life, and may save him or his wife from want. You saw this man in the park yonder, you witnessed his paroxysm, you saw him clutching this handkerchief, and know that he did not lose hold of it until he gave it to me. Though we did not see this substance ejected from his lung, your testimony and mine will prevent the possibility of doubt on that score. If he and his wife alone had witnessed it no one would have believed."

"Why not?" asked the other.

"Because, though there is nothing really improbable in it, this case is one in which the very completeness of the proof it furnishes of the truth of his statement makes it seem almost incredible. You are too young to know anything about the war in which this man served?"

The minister nodded assent.

"I was in it—all through it, I may say. You look surprised. I am almost surprised myself when I think that I was that man's comrade. A few years of war age the mass of those engaged in it wonderfully. But I was fortunate. Not only was I young, but I have one of those quickly recuperative natures which repairs waste at the first opportunity. I was only a boy, and I ate and slept, not troubling myself about what might be my fate or that of the nation. There were thousands who could not do this; who carried the interests of civilization in a knapsack, and were not content to fight, but had to pray and fear for the future as well as for themselves. This man," nodding his head toward the larger room, "was probably one of those. Though for that matter, it is enough to make any man old to carry that bit of lead about in his lung for a quarter of a century. You wonder how I know he has done so? It tells its own story. You never knew about the bullets we used then. I was much interested in them. In fact, I think I may trace my professional bias to my army life. I made quite a collection of these deadly missiles, which I picked up on a score of battle-fields. Some of them have curious histories. They were blunt lead cones with hollow bases, and these hollow bases used to do remarkable things. I have one now that struck the red corps-badge on the cap of a soldier, passed through his head, and through the shoulder of the man behind him, lodging in his knapsack. Yet it still holds, pinched in between those basal edges, a bit of the red worsted of the corps-badge on the forehead of its first victim.

"This piece of lead tells even a more wonderful story. Those letters which you can still distinguish are the trade-mark of a buried nation. At the upper part of that hollow cone were always stamped in the enemy's ammunition the letters C. S., surrounded by a little raised ring. You can distinguish the C, a part of the S, and a segment of the ring which inclosed them. That is his justification; and if there is no more where this came from, and no pieces of bone in the lung, and if the disease has not yet got too firm a hold, he may recover."

"God grant it!" said the minister with simple fervor.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPERT'S OPINION.

Jonas Underwood showed neither exultation nor surprise when informed of the discovery the physician had made. He had already been warned of the danger to be apprehended from excitement or exertion, and only his eyes expressed the gratification which he felt. The few moments which had elapsed since he had choked while eating his luncheon in the square had made a great change in the strong-willed, masterful man. Now that he had seen with his own eyes the fulfilment of his oft-repeated assertion in regard to the cause of his ailment, he did not seem to be as confident of recovery as he had been before. It is curious how quickly the loss of a little blood in this manner demoralizes the strongest nature. The hemorrhage may hardly amount to an ounce, but the victim feels at once that the fountain of life has been tapped, and from that instant confidence and self-assertion vanish. This transformation had taken place in Jonas Underwood. He knew the danger of hemorrhage and gave all his thought to avoiding it. Even the knowledge of his redeemed honor as a soldier was not enough to divert his attention from this purpose.

To the physician this state of mind seemed very hopeful. He interpreted it as meaning that all the force of a strong nature would be exerted to avoid a recurrence of dangerous symptoms. The wife, however, regarded it as the apathy which so often precedes dissolution. When it was proposed that the patient should remain in the study until better able to be removed, it was gladly assented to by both. The wife had feared that she might be separated from her husband by his removal to a hospital, a thing hardly less painful to her than the prospect of his death. The only question raised by either was as to the inconvenience of the congregation. Murvale Eastman at once put an end to all scruples of that sort by declaring that the evening services would be dispensed with if necessary rather than interfere with the comfort of the invalid. The wife was confident that the music of the organ would be beneficial rather than harmful, and the sick man himself declared in a whisper that he would especially like to hear the sermon. It was decided, therefore, that for a time at least, Jonas Underwood should become the pastor's guest, and arrangements were soon completed which transformed the study into a temporary hospital.

"How did you come to venture so far from home?" asked the physician when this was decided, as he entered the place of residence with the ordinary brief history of the case in his note-book.

There was a half-smile on the patient's visage, made all the more grim by unusual pallor as the wife replied:

"He claimed that he had some business here in the square, something about a street that is to run across it."

"Rockridge Avenue?" suggested the physician.

"That is it."

"What interest had he in that?"

"Oh, he hadn't any—just wanted to try himself and see how much he could stand. He meant to take his 'run' again to-morrow if he found he was able."

The patient shook his head smilingly.

"He says that is not so, Mrs. Underwood," said the physician, catching the silent remonstrance.

"Ah, that was all a pretence!" answered the woman with good-humored confidence. "He found an advertisement for a lot of people to come into court and say why a street should not go through the square, and he said one of them was his grandmother and pretended that he ought to come and represent her."

"So?" said the physician. "Who was his grandmother? I thought you were Western people."

"So we are," said the woman with some warmth. "But

Jonas' folks used to live here, and one of them — his grandfather or great-grandfather—is said to have made the city a present of a park; and he thought this might be the one. Of course it was only a notion."

"Indeed! and what was the ancestor's name? As a physician and a scion of one of the old families, I thought I knew them all. I do not remember your name among them."

"It was through his mother; she was a Lott, and her mother was a Valentine."

"A Valentine! Not a relative of old Ximenes Valentine?"

"That's the name. Jonas is the only one of the family left."

"Daniel Ximenes——" began the invalid in a hoarse whisper.

"Sh!" said the doctor warningly. "You must not speak a word that is not absolutely necessary; and I do not need any one to tell me the name of one who did the country so much honor, and to whom my own family owed a special grudge. My mother was a Blalock, and I am very glad to be able to pay off a debt of malice now some generations old; but such obligations are never outlawed. I have you in my power, sir," shaking his finger at the sick man, "and mean to avenge the wrongs of my ancestors on the child of their old enemy. Don't it make you feel at home to meet one who has a spite against you? You're right in your guess about the square; that is the very park Ximenes Valentine gave to the city, and most shamefully has his generosity been requited. I will admit that, even if my own kin *were* at the bottom of a good deal of it. By the way, I wonder—dominie, do you know if Metziger is in the city?"

"Yes, he was at church to-day and came in here to shake hands with me after the services."

"He did! Well, you must have done or said something very unusual for a minister lately, if he did that. I hope you've not been getting into any trouble? I'll risk you, though, if Metziger is on your side," said the physician jocularly. "But I must go now, for I must see Metziger at once. It's allowable to do good on the Sabbath day, isn't it, dominie? That's the only time I get to indulge such inclinations. Do not be troubled, madam; just keep your husband quiet. I will send everything you will need and a nurse to relieve you."

"But the expense, doctor?" asked the woman doubtfully, mindful of her husband's sensitiveness upon that point.

"Oh, never mind that!" said both physician and minister in a breath.

The sick man's eyes closed and tears stole between the lids, but he made no objection. The wife tried to phrase her thanks, but with poor success. The physician hurriedly took his leave, and the pastor stepped out with him into the quaint vestibule.

"See here, dominie," said the physician, putting a hand on the other's shoulder, "my wife was just telling me, when your message came, of the hornet's nest you stirred up this morning. As near as I could get hold of it you're on the right track. I don't know how the matter is ever going to be straightened out, but one thing is sure—matters will never get right if somebody doesn't start to set them right. I'm not much on religion, you know that; but I'm strong on humanity. The profession always has been since Galen's time. And nobody sees the evils of our civilization or recognizes them more fully than we do.

But we are cautious—conservative, we call ourselves. It's a foolish term, for, given a clear diagnosis, and we are the most daring experimenters in the world. Now, I've only one thing to say to you: don't try to get ahead too fast. That's the trouble with these fellows who seek to cure the ills of humanity with a nostrum. They forget that a perfect knowledge of disease, at least the most perfect possible, must precede any use of remedial measures. And very often the knowledge of the cause is all that is necessary to make a cure not only possible, but the easiest thing in the world. For instance, I can't help that man in there much beyond telling him what it is necessary for him to abstain from doing. That lacerated lung must have time to heal, and must be relieved of all possible strain in order that it may heal. When I have convinced him of that I have done the main part of the physician's duty. It is so, in a great measure, I take it, with collective social evils. The first thing to be done is to study the cause of disease. Poverty and crime and drunkenness are only the external indices of moral evil. They indicate bad blood, lack of nutrition, disordered functions in the body politic, just as scurvy and typhus show malign hygienic conditions. The least of the physician's business is to cure: his greater function is to show how disease may be warded off by observing healthful conditions.

"I think the same thing is true of the church, only perhaps more so. It may bring salvation to the dying, festering, diseased soul even at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour of life; but every time it does so it condemns itself. The church by its slothfulness, its unwisdom, its refusal to promote the right and disapprove the wrong, has let that soul slip down to the edge of hell, and publishes its own shame and condemnation when it holds the Saviour up before the sin-bleared eyes and says, 'Believe and ye shall be saved!' You are on the right track, dominie, in my opinion, but don't go to concocting remedies until you are sure—reasonably sure—that they will at least not do more harm than good. I don't know as I can be of much assistance, but I can assure you, you may look to the medical profession for countenance and approval; and as for me, if you see any place for me to help the matter on, all you have to do is to ring me up on the telephone, and—say so."

He wrung the hand of the pastor, who had no voice for thanks, and started down the steps.

"By the way," he said, turning back when half-way to the sidewalk, "I may be mistaken, but I shouldn't wonder if you had gone into the angel business—unawares, you know—in that man in there. There is fine blood in that old Valentine stock, wonderful fine, and fate has a curious way of avenging the wrongs of the just. Nobody sees that oftener than a physician. If it should happen, now—but I must see Metziger. Good-day."

CHAPTER X.

A CHRYSALID'S RETROSPECT.

WHEN Murvale Eastman reached his lodging and sat down to his luncheon, he could hardly realize that scarce an hour had passed since he pronounced the benediction over the bowed heads of his congregation. Not so much had happened in the mean while, but somehow he felt as if he had lived a long time in that brief interval. This is often the case. The soul does not measure time by seconds, nor yet by heart-beats, but by modifications in its own quality and character. The watches of the world may stop; the planets may cease to measure the flight of time; the body may retain its pristine vigor—but in an hour, a moment almost, the heart may grow old, the man be transformed.

It is this fact that the mere scientist is sure to neglect in his estimate of humanity. He says of a man, of a people, or a race, given food, climate, and physical conditions of a specific character, and certain results will follow. Presently the conditions are all fulfilled and the results do *not* follow. Why? Simply because the mightiest part of the human being was left out of account in the scientist's estimate. So, too, that pessimistic philosophy which calls itself "realism" in art and literature, always is, and always will be, at fault when it tries to solve the riddle of humanity. It says human nature, human character, is a result of the operation of natural laws. So it is; but those laws are not all physical, nor purely mental. The soul must be taken into account if one would comprehend humanity or truly portray character. Impulse, affections, sentiments, convictions, emotions—these are more potent than all other forces in shaping the man and, if general in their application, the multitude. Every man's knowledge, almost every man's experience, is full of transformation scenes. It is a literal fact that "love works miracles;" so do hate and fear and the continuing power of cumulative ill. There is in truth no miracle about it. It is in these soul-forces, even more than in physical laws and conditions, that the secret of progress and the highest truth of human life lie hid. In a man or a people, the crises of sentiment or conviction are more important than physical conditions in determining character or prescribing the lines of truthful delineation in literature or art.

"A live dog is better than a dead lion," is an artistic as well as spiritual truth. The artist who forgets the soul may carve with unerring skill the "dead lion," but he who with many faults of line and curve portrays the "live dog," will ever rank as the greater artist, when the whimsical dictate of fashion is forgotten.

Murvale Eastman was conscious that some such change had been taking place in himself. The man who had first entered the pulpit of the Golden Lilies, only two years before, seemed to him strangely unfamiliar, almost a lifetime away in thought, sentiment, character. He was eminently a healthy man, however, in body, brain, and soul. There was no more morbidness in his thought than flaccidness in his muscles. So he ate his luncheon with hearty relish, wondering if he really was the self-same man who had hesitated to do so commonplace a thing as to speak his own thought, only a few hours before. Was it hours or ages? And was he the Murvale Eastman of that remote past, or was that only a vision, a remembrance, an impression from some other state of existence?

The bells of the Golden Lilies did not ring for evening service that night, but the crowds that pressed through its artistic portal found the pastor already in the pulpit, and the organ sending out a low, quavering strain of dreamy restfulness. When the time for opening had come, the crowd was still pouring in through the open doors, the pews were crowded, and people sat on chairs in the aisles, until the great auditorium could hold no more. Some even stood around the walls, and there were little groups about the doors that led into the vestibule. They were an eager and excited throng, for the story of the morning sermon had gone abroad through the city and created a sensation. Many had come merely from curiosity, some in hope, and some to see a man who was foolish enough to take the course the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies was reported to have adopted. Much to his own surprise Murvale Eastman felt neither pride nor trepidation. If many came, it but enhanced his responsibility; and whether many or few he felt no longer any question in regard to his duty. The one soul that would listen almost breathless in the darkened study to his words occupied quite as much of his thought as the sea of faces the electric lights lit up.

When the organ strain had ceased and the opening prayer had been made, he told the congregation that the services would be brief because of the accidental presence, in an apartment of the church, of one whom it was not deemed wise to remove at that time, and whose safety might be endangered by excitement. The door into the study was ajar, and somehow every one in the vast audience seemed suddenly to be aware that a critical scene in the tragedy of life was being enacted in the darkened room beyond.

A hymn was softly sung by the choir, and in the wondering hush that followed, the minister announced his text in the simple, unpretentious manner which had marked his morning discourse.

"'*The Sabbath was made for man.*'

"Not merely," said the speaker, "for his individual refreshment, not merely for physical or spiritual recreation, but for the welfare and advantage of mankind. To that it was particularly consecrated, and to that it should be especially devoted."

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW DOCTRINE.

"CHRISTIANITY," continued the minister, looking over his congregation and for the first time becoming aware of that alert expectancy which greeted his words, so different from the contented, matter-of-course attention which had usually been accorded his pulpit utterances, "Christianity is emphatically the religion of humanity. Earth and man are its themes. Justice for the strong and mercy for the weak—these were the lessons Christ inculcated. He was not concerned with forms and ceremonies. He established no church; he organized no cult; he prescribed no form of worship. 'The Twelve' and 'The Seventy,' what were they? They named themselves and assumed rank afterward; but the Master—thank God, he had not time nor inclination for such trifles! To him they were simply two bands of disciples to whom he had taught his great lessons of human betterment. Peace, righteousness, charity—these were the grand ingredients of his message.

"Peace: 'Whatsoever house ye shall enter, say, Peace be within these walls.'

"Righteousness: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.'

"Charity: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' 'Do good to those that despitefully use you.'

"These are the cardinal points of Christ's religion as we learn it from Christ's words. Of creed and prayer there is hardly enough to enable us to guess the desirability of profession and liturgical form.

"The *formal* part of Christianity is of man. However ancient, however worthy of regard the organization of the Church may be, it must be admitted that the *machinery* of Christianity is of human devising, or was communicated through human agencies. It is intended to promote Christianization, the conversion of sinners, the profession and encouragement of Christians. The Master's purpose, that to which *his* thought, self-sacrifice, and devotion were given, was the *betterment of human conditions*.

[illegible]

"'Come unto me all ye weary'—'smitten with toil' is the radical significance of the Greek word he uses—'and I will give you rest.' 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light,' is his message to those same toilers. What does the Master mean by these words addressed to his disciples? Evidently that the adoption of his principles, his philosophy of human relations in government and society, would make the condition of the toilers, of the masses, more tolerable. His disciples fully understood this to be the prime purpose and idea of the Master's life. But how it was to be carried into effect they did not know. It was the central mystery of that revelation which has been unfolding like a flower from the hour he taught on Olivet until the present. His disciples comprehended its purport, but not its operation. They could not. The human mind does not ripen in an instant. The Master's words required the light of ages to be cast upon them before the world could grasp their significance. He did not embarrass human weakness by prescribing methods. He did not say *how* this yoke was to be made which should make the world's great burden light. That he left to them, to us, to find out.

"The disciples showed their appreciation of this message by establishing a communistic association immediately after his crucifixion. Probably his personal followers had practiced community of goods during his life. How long it continued we do not know. The believers of Macedonia and Achaia proposed, Paul tells us, to make 'a community of goods with the poor saints at Jerusalem.' We have translated it 'a contribution,' which originally meant the same thing, *to wit*, an equal share of a common burden, but has now come to mean a mere voluntary dole.

"In a more or less perfect form the communistic idea probably attached to the Church in Rome in its early days. There is little doubt that the Christians of the Catacombs were communists—not, I judge, compulsorily, but voluntarily. This early Christian socialism, indeed, seems always to have been voluntary. Freedom of thought and action was the first great lesson the disciples learned, and they learned it well. 'They that believed,' we are told, 'were of one heart.' 'Neither said any of them aught of the things *which he possessed* was his own!' 'They had all things in common.' 'Neither was there any among them that lacked.'

"This is the picture of Christian communism after the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. How like an echo it seems of that earlier Scripture, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof!' Even then, however, it seems to have been purely voluntary. Those who chose entered into this community for mutual aid and support; those who did not, retained their individual possessions. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not in retaining the value of their lands. 'While it remained,' said the sturdy fisher-disciple, 'was it not thine own? And when thou hadst sold it, was it not in thine own power?' They desired to share the benefits of the community of goods, without performing the one condition that entitled them to support out of the common fund, *to wit*, the surrender of what they possessed. Their act was fraudulent; that was their crime.

"This experiment,under the direct control of the Apostles, was a failure. We do not know how long it lasted nor why it failed; but we have certainly a right to infer that if community of goods and obliteration of individual possession, attempted under the direction of the immediate disciples of the Christ, proved a failure with the early devotees of the new religion, it at least was not the means by which the Master expected his benign purposes toward men to be carried into effect. Christianity, even more notably than Judaism, is a religion of individualism. There are but two essences in it, Man and God—the Individual and the Creator, the Finite and the Infinite. There is no machinery, no substituted representative of the Divine Will. The Master says nothing about obedience to the Church, and gives no man or set of men the power to command another's obedience or relieve another soul of doubt or responsibility. Christ's words were uttered to all men, and must be obeyed by each for himself, according to his own conviction.

"Community of goods implies not merely a lessening of individual burdens, but a restriction of the domain of individual duty. The tendency of Christianity is in exactly the opposite direction, toward the expansion of individualism and the extension of individual responsibility. All healthful progress in the Church and in the civilization that Christianity has colored, has been in that direction. This was only a first experiment by which Christian believers sought to find out a way to carry into effect Christ's teachings as to human conditions. They sought for a way by which man might cast the greater part of his individual duty upon his fellows collectively. They failed because, though they heard his word, they did not comprehend its import. They were in error, just as in the common belief of that time that Christ would come again while one of the Apostles was still alive. Since that, there have been many experiments in the same direction. They have all failed, as such experiments will always fail, because the crown and glory of humanity is individualism, and Christ's religion is always an appeal to the better elements of humanity.

"After that, for ages we find the Church insisting on alms—'charity,' we call it when we try to stretch the blanket of our good works so as to make it cover the Divine requirement—provision for the aged and poor, as the sole measure and limit of Christian duty as regards the physical conditions of others. This is, in the main, the present position of the Church: each man has a right to hold whatever earthly possessions he may lawfully acquire; he has a right, within certain limits, to bequeath his accumulations to whomsoever he may elect. The duty of society is to give every man a fair education; to care for the infirm and enfeebled; to punish and restrain criminals. As to preventing impoverishment—making the yoke easy and the burden light to those stricken with toil, the doers, the burden-bearers of society, we acknowledge no duty of betterment, of sympathy, of regard or encouragement in this direction. The rich man is more welcome in the Church than the poor man, and the rich Christian finds himself under no obligation to see that his schemes to obtain wealth do not result in the impoverishment of others.

"Attention has sometimes been given to the idea of equalizing conditions. Methods have been proposed to keep the poor from growing poorer, and to make it easier for some of them, at least, to grow richer. The purpose is no doubt akin to the fundamental idea of the Founder of Christianity, that it is the duty of the strong to assist the weak—*not* to devour them. It has assumed various forms in the development of civilization, sometimes through governmental action, sometimes through voluntary association. Both are merely approximations to the Christian ideal, that the duty of the strong is to help the weak. 'Bear ye one another's burdens' did not mean prayers and sympathy and tears alone; not merely offering food and shelter to those whose burdens have already crushed them. It meant, and it means to-day, that the strong should devote a part of his strength to enabling his weaker brother to carry his burden more easily, more successfully, more profitably, if you will. If Christianization were the only aim of Christianity; if it stood on a level with Mahometanism, and had for its sole function the conversion of mankind to its tenets, it would still be the most profound wisdom that should adopt this principle as a rule of action, since it is the surest method of securing the acceptance of the religious system it represents, by the masses of mankind.

"Society punishes crime and feeds the man in absolute need of bread. Government goes farther sometimes, and conditions the power of the strong so that it shall not oppress or discourage the weak. It not only relieves want, but seeks to prevent dependency and depression. Bankruptcy laws, homestead exemptions, laws against usury, the limitations of corporate privilege, the regulation of traffic—these and many other laws are intended solely to prevent the rich from using the power of accumulated wealth to make the poor poorer, more dependent, and consequently less peaceful and contented citizens. This is not done for the benefit of the weak alone, but for the common welfare and advantage.

"The *social* function of Christianity is not merely to relieve want or exercise 'charity,' but *to incline the hearts of men in their individual, corporate, and political relations to refrain from doing evil, and induce them to assist rather than oppress the weak.* It is well to organize 'charity' to relieve destitution, but it is a thousand times better to practice that charity—'kindliness' is the true rendering—'Love thy neighbor as thyself'—which tends to prevent destitution. Thus far the Church has neglected to a great degree the consideration of this phase of human duty. We have reversed the Master's lesson, and given more prominence to the divine than to the human element of Christianity. Christianization has been its chief aim; the betterment of human conditions only an incident. Yet the Master has laid down one rule by which alone the value of Christian belief may be measured: 'By their fruits shall ye know them,' and the 'fruits' of Christianity are not merely the graces of Christian character, but the practice of Christ's teachings in regard to Christian duty.

> " 'Religion is no leaf of faded green,
> Or flower of vanished fragrance pressed between
> The pages of a Bible.'

"Profoundly convinced of this, I believe it is the present duty of the Church to turn away for a time from 'the mint and cummin' of religious theory, forget for awhile 'the selfishness of salvation,' and consider what we may do for human betterment, to lessen human woe, to increase the sum of human happiness, and advance the standard of human duty; to labor, in short, for human elevation on earth both as an end and as the surest method of effecting the eternal salvation of man.

"Thus far we have allowed the discussion of these questions to remain chiefly in the hands of those who are hostile to Christian belief, sometimes mere buccaneers who fly the flag of human betterment in the hope of advantage by some great eruption. The Church has no right to allow its enemies to outstrip it in the study of the means by which civilization may be fully consecrated to the improvement of human conditions. No set of ranters, whose only idea of progress is the disruption of Society and the destruction of all that the past has achieved with such lavish expense of blood and tears, should be allowed to claim credit for being more interested in the welfare of society than is the Church, which should not set limits to progress, but point out new lines of advance. The Church should be the support of Society—not as it *is*, but as it *ought* to be—the staunch, unflinching champion of all there is of good, and the unrelenting enemy of all there is of evil in it. It does not do its duty by singing hymns with half-shut eyes, or dreaming dreams of heavenly bliss. Wide-open eyes are needed—eyes that smile upon the good in life and seek out and blast with the heat of fierce disapproval all that is bad.

"'The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath,' said the Master, and this Sabbath, this rest-day, this green oasis in the arid desert of heated life, he expressly consecrates, not to religious speculation, not to formal worship or the rhapsody of religious emotion, but to *Man:* 'The Sabbath was made for man.' Not merely for the physical or spiritual enjoyment of man, but to his advantage and benefit. As the Lord of the Sabbath devoted his life on earth to doing good, so he demands that his followers, of all classes and conditions, shall make the welfare of their fellows the first and highest object in life, after their own wants and the comfort of those dependent upon them. *This is Christian Socialism.*"

The pastor saw a flash of gratified expectancy sweep through the audience as he uttered these words. A couple of reporters who had secured places at a table just at the right of the pulpit, exchanged glances as their hands flew over the pages of their note-books, and each in his own peculiar manner marked the pastor's words as an effective head-line in their reports. An exultant "I-told-you-so" expression came into the eyes of some who had listened moodily to his words, while a pained, apprehensive look passed over faces which had been lighted up with approbation and hope. Both the apprehension of his friends and the exultation of his enemies was short-lived. The speaker continued:

"The Church has no right to permit this term, which should mean the science of practical amendment of social conditions, to be appropriated by men whose only notions of progress are either impossible changes of human nature or the overthrow of all existing social conditions. Christian Socialism should 'hold fast all that is good,' while bending the energies of all believers to the attainment of that which is better. It demands a nobler ideal of duty toward humanity as well as a higher standard of individual character. For eighteen hundred years the Church has devoted its Sabbaths mainly to the work of Christianization, the inculcation of doctrine, the assertion of theologic dogma, the contemplation of divine excellence, and the portrayal of Christian graces. Profoundly convinced that the true interests of the Church, the cause of Christianity, and the spirit of the Master's teachings demand that we should follow his example as well as study his precepts, your pastor has decided to devote the morning service during the ensuing year to the consideration of Christian Socialism, the study of the relation of the Christian believer to the conditions attaching to to-day's life and affecting to-morrow's welfare. In this effort to trace more clearly the line of Christian duty he asks the cordial co-operation of this church and congregation, and on their joint endeavor invokes the blessing of Almighty God."

CHAPTER XII.

SNARES FOR UNWARY FEET.

THE plan of action thus simply announced brought consternation to the minds of some who were already considering in what manner the young minister's vagaries might be most easily repressed. The sermon of the morning had showed him halting and undecided as to the course he should pursue. In that of the evening there was no trace of doubt. He had made the announcement of his purpose as if it were the most natural thing in the world that he should declare in advance the subject of fifty-two consecutive sermons. And what a subject—Christian Socialism! The very idea brought thrills of agonizing apprehension to many a pious soul. What did it mean? Where would it end? In the Church of the Golden Lilies too, of all places in the world! And he consulted with no one, asked nobody's advice, but went right on as if the wishes of the congregation were nothing to him. Of course, it would attract the rabble. Instead of being the most aristocratic church in the city, the Golden Lilies would now be filled with an unfashionable multitude of beggars and "cranks"—people with whom its membership might be willing to associate in heaven, but desired to put off the pleasure of their acquaintance as long as possible.

This declaration made it very difficult to take active measures against him. It was evident that the multitude would be on his side. The size of the congregation showed that; but what sort of a congregation was it for the Church of the Golden Lilies? More than half of them were people nobody knew and whom nobody who was "in society" would speak to on the street. Thus far Murvale Eastman had said nothing that could be used to his detriment, though some thought he had several times come very near doing so. What he would say in that year of speculation upon such a topic it would be impossible to foretell. Of course, they could not proceed against a man for what he was expected to say, and it would be useless to attempt to boycott him, for the church was sure to be fuller than ever before, even if all of its members absented themselves. So, too, it would be foolish to attempt to starve him out. The laboring poor would contribute of their poverty to make up his salary if he should appeal to them, just to spite the rich members of the church. They might increase its membership, too. Of course, that might be prevented by proper action of its members, but suppose people came with letters from other churches? It looked as if the Church of the Golden Lilies was in danger of being broken up and its members driven out of the beautiful home they had built. Almost unwittingly, Murvale Eastman had played the strongest possible card in thus taking the public into his confidence. In answering the challenge of the morning he had silenced his enemies before they had time to open fire upon him.

These facts were admitted by a few of the leading men of the congregation of the Golden Lilies, as they sauntered homeward after the services were over. They were solid men, whose consciences hid behind charters which enabled them to serve God with pure hearts on the Sabbath, while they also enjoyed the pleasure of handling the clarified wages of sin during the rest of the week. Things it would not do for an individual Christian to uphold, were well enough in a soulless corporation made up of individual Christians; because "business is business," and "corporations are organized not for charity, but for profit." They were shrewd men, these magnates of "the street," and admitted that the young divine, whom they had never suspected of such vagaries, had not only stolen a march on them in his morning's discourse, but had made the best possible use of his time in the interval between that and the evening service. He had taken the verdict of his people, and finding it unfavorable to his views had instantly and confidently appealed to that larger congregation, the great body of Christian believers throughout the world—from the Church of the Golden Lilies to the Church of Christ. At the same time the shrewd and solid magnates of the church did not question their ability to neutralize his influence. They believed in the power of money. They saw the daily miracles it performed, and had no doubt that with its aid they could overthrow the young athlete who had dared to match his manhood and a strained sense of duty against the dictates of prudence. Some of them felt a little sorry for him, but self-preservation is the first law of nature, and he must take what he had brought on himself. The question was—and it was the only question—what was to be done in the premises?

They stopped at Mr. Kishu's house, accepting his invitation to come in and talk matters over for a little while, and sat, hat in hand, on the wide chairs of brown embossed leather in his library, while they discussed the situation. There was no argument in regard to the pastor's theory, whether it was right or wrong. It was not the sort of doctrine the Golden Lilies wanted, and that was enough. They paid the highest market price for ministerial service, and had a right to say what they wanted and have what they paid for. It wouldn't quite do to say so, and of course some other reason must be found for ousting him from the pulpit he had filled so acceptably before becoming possessed of this craze. All the same he must go—that was the unanimous opinion. Even silence or acknowledgment of error would not save him now; he had gone too far.

They concluded finally that the best thing to be done was to provide for a verbatim report of his sermons, and have specially damnatory passages selected and submitted to experts with a view to catching him in some theological net of skepticism or error. As Mr. Kishu had special conveniences for that sort of thing, the matter was left to him to carry into effect. He rubbed his soft hands together unctuously, and assured his auditors that he would set "one of his young men" at the matter without delay; adding, with a quiet smile, that probably the best way to settle the whole thing would be for something to happen that would induce the pastor to take a long vacation—go abroad for a year or two, for instance.

A succession of winks and shrugs went around the little circle at this suggestion.

"Beats us all," said one of the deacons, thrusting a thumb against the well-cushioned ribs of another. "What's the use of an official board in the Golden Lilies? Let Brother Kishu alone to take care of its interests!"

"The very thing for a wedding-trip," said another, ducking his head and explosively applauding his own perspicacity. The laugh was echoed suggestively by all the others. It was an open secret that the pastor of the Golden Lilies was in love with Lilian Kishu.

Mr. Kishu smiled blandly at these compliments and intimations, but made no reply. One of the secrets of his success was his ability to leave unsaid what there was no need of saying. He bowed his guests out with that cumbrous deference for which he was noted, which took the place both of grace and courtesy with him.

The good brethren need not have troubled themselves to set snares for the feet of their young pastor. Events were hastening on which would give both him and them enough to occupy their attention, and already while they were conspiring against him the representative of a great newspaper was endeavoring to secure from Murvale Eastman the sole right of publishing the promised sermons.

CHAPTER XIII.

ATTACKING THE SUPPLY TRAIN.

THE day succeeding the first Sabbath of his new year, Murvale Eastman might have counted himself famous, if the newspaper were the accredited herald of fame, for every morning journal in the land had some sort of notice of the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies and his yesterday's utterances. Some of them were fairly correct, some utterly absurd; some commended and others sneered. Neither commendation nor ridicule disturbed the young minister, who, having had no thought of popularity in what he had done, was now more inclined to laugh at the tumult he had raised than regard it as a matter of serious import.

Although it was his regular day off, it was a busy one, fortunately for him, as he thereby escaped the crowd of reporters who were anxious to learn whatever might be gleaned in regard to a man who had suddenly become a subject of interest to the public. Whether it would last or not, Murvale Eastman was "good" for a column in any paper of the city and from a quarter to a half column in the great dailies of other cities, if one could only get something to fill the space. Where he had been graduated; what theological seminary he had attended; that his first work had been as a supply in a New England village, where he made no serious impression; his second in a Pennsylvania mining-town, where he had some trouble; and his third, after a year's interval, in one of those queer conglomerates, a Colorado settlement which had been a city while its boom lasted, and had shrunk almost beneath the limit of corporate dignity when it passed by—these were facts easily obtainable. There did not seem to be anything more to be said about him. He was a man of fair ability only, without any apparent desire for leadership or notoriety, and by birth and affiliation about the last man who would have been expected to "make a break."

This was all that could be learned by the industrious reporters. He was said not to be at his lodgings, and a card hung on the door of his study at the church gave the information that he would not be there during the day, but that a sick man lay within, whose life would be endangered if disturbed. Callers were, therefore, requested not to ring the bell. Though many believed the man in the pastor's study was somehow at the bottom of his transformation, none of the reporters failed to comply with this courteous request. Several, it is true, hung about the place for hours. The only bit of information they secured was that the famous lawyer, Mr. Herman Metziger, called in company with Dr. Farwell. The latter, on being questioned in regard to the matter, said that his patient was a man by the name of Underwood, who had been seized with hemorrhage in the park the day before, and was taken into the study to wait for an ambulance. He was a poor man, but as it was thought his life would be endangered by immediate removal, Mr. Eastman insisted on giving up the study until he could be taken away without peril.

The Reverend Murvale Eastman, himself, had suddenly disappeared. Mr. Kishu, who had sent a note to his pastor the night before asking him to call at his office at a certain hour, found on his desk a brief reply, regretting that an imperative engagement would render it impossible for him to do so.

To say that the magnate of the Golden Lilies was disturbed by this unexpected response to his request is to state his feelings very mildly. Few men ever declined one of Mr. Kishu's invitations to call at his office. One of the arts on which his success was based consisted in always meeting friends and foes upon ground of his own choosing. He never consummated a trade or conducted a negotiation except in his own office, if it were possible to avoid doing so. He would pay the expenses of a journey half across the continent, rather than conclude an important matter without having the representative of opposing interests face to face with him at his own desk. Though he kept his well-appointed landau always at the door during business hours, it was seldom used to convey him to an appointment unless with a committee or corporation which were required to meet elsewhere. He sent his carriage for men of prominence, personal requests to men of less distinction, and had his clerk call up on the telephone those whom he did not care to flatter by such attention.

Mr. Wilton Kishu was an adept in the art of producing indirect effects. Recognizing his own lack of attractive qualities, he determined, at the outset of his career, to make up for personal defects as far as possible by impressive surroundings. His office, even when his circumstances were but moderate, was of a notable character. He believed his surroundings to be to a business man very much what good clothes are to a man of fashion. Indeed, it was said of him by his enemies—if so good a man as Mr. Kishu may be said to have enemies—that he began business upon "money enough to furnish an office and cheek enough to supply a city." Having furnished the office, the next thing was to get desirable people to enter it. To accomplish this, he set up his carriage, a modest enough affair at first, and managed, upon one pretext or another, to induce the "solid" men of the city to allow themselves to be driven to his office and back again for the purpose of consulting with him upon some matter that promised advantage. At first, he always apologized for making such a request. After a little it came to be understood that he adopted this course as much for the convenience of those having business with him, as his own, and it was looked upon as a good-natured way of economizing the time of both. By careful study he was able to arrange it so that a number of leading men of the city should be seen to enter and leave his office every day, thus creating an impression of his own importance which, if hardly based on actual facts, was not the result of actual misrepresentation. This habit gradually shaped itself into a system, so that for years one of the most important features of Wilton Kishu's daily business was to determine whom he would have at his office the next day, and in what order his callers should arrive.

In a man of less solid qualities, such things would have been only the arts of an adventurer. But Wilton Kishu was no adventurer. He was merely a man of unprepossessing personality without compensating intellectual culture, who took advantage of a shrewd knowledge of human nature to make up for these deficiencies by the skilful use of externals. He was neither witty, nor learned, nor polished in manner, but he knew men, and played upon them with a nicety and precision of touch that was altogether admirable. By constant attention to such details, he had made himself not only one of the richest men of the city, but also one of its best-known characters. He knew how to make himself talked about without saying anything of importance himself; and, without incurring the risks or expense of office-seeking or office-holding, contrived to be generally referred to as one who would confer an inestimable blessing upon the city and the country if he would only consent to abandon his business, forego his leisure, and show how a municipality or a commonwealth could be run, if a man of supreme integrity and undoubted ability chose to devote himself to the task. Nobody knew exactly what were his political views, and he had never been heard to express any pronounced conviction upon public questions, yet he had more than once been considered as a possible presidential contingency; and his availability had been discussed by the organs of more than one party, with a gravity that hid from the mass of readers all suspicion of the fact that the suggestion proceeded originally from Mr. Kishu himself.

He had been accustomed to use the pastor of the Golden Lilies as a foil, and to command his presence almost as a right. The good Dr. Eudimon had been very careful to honor these demands upon his time, both because the company he met in his parishioner's office was sure to be agreeable, and because he deemed it wise to subserve the wishes of one who did so much for his church. Murvale Eastman had done likewise, hitherto moved not only by sincere regard for his parishioner, but by the more powerful magnetism of Lilian Kishu's beauty. He loved in the same hearty fashion he did all other things, and never once thought of making any secret of his admiration. That Mr. Kishu should be surprised at the unexpected declination he received was but natural. For once in his life he acted upon the suggestion of anger rather than prudence, and entering his landau, drove to the minister's lodgings, determined to tell the young man what he thought of the course he was taking. He smiled as he saw a number of reporters waiting about the place, evidently as incredulous as himself in regard to the pastor's absence.

Ringing the door-bell, he handed his card to the servant, and asked to be shown to Mr. Eastman's room. On being assured that the young man was out, he smiled blandly, gave the girl a quarter, and asked to see the landlady. He was shown into the parlor, where after a few moments the lady came and greeted him with no little trepidation.

"You know me, I suppose, madam?"

"Oh, yes; you are Mr. Kishu."

"Mr. Wilton Kishu," he corrected, for he made a point of using his full name.

"Mr. Wilton Kishu," repeated the lady submissively.

"It is of the utmost importance that I should see Mr. Eastman without delay."

"I am very sorry, sir," said the woman, "but Mr. Eastman—really, I cannot understand what could have induced him to go off so—so unceremoniously just now. He must have known there would be hosts of people to see him to-day. Don't you think so, Mr. Kishu?"

"Really, madam, I cannot say what he expected," answered Mr. Kishu. "But as for me, I must see him at once."

"But he is not in," said the lady in surprise.

"Oh, I understand all that," rejoined Mr. Kishu with a knowing smile. "You need not admit anything; just show me to his room. I will take all the blame."

"But, Mr. Kishu," remonstrated the woman, "you are mistaken. I am accustomed to speak the truth. Mr. Eastman left the house this morning very early, before five o'clock, and has not since returned."

"He left word as to where he was going?"

"Not a syllable, sir."

"Nor when he would return?" asked the bewildered magnate.

"You know as much about it as I, sir."

"He *must* have left some message—for me," incredulously.

"You can go and see for yourself," said the landlady angrily. "First floor, second door to the right," she added as she opened the door into the hall.

Mr. Kishu went doggedly along the passage, climbed the stairs, knocked at the door indicated, and receiving no response, after a moment opened it and went in.

It was the room of a man who evidently enjoyed life. A comfortable dressing-gown hung over an easy-chair, and rods and guns were intermingled with books and pictures. The desk was open. For a moment it seemed as if Mr. Kishu was going to inspect its contents, but he drew back as if resisting temptation, and cast his small gray eyes about the room in search of some indication of the owner's whereabouts. The apartment was apparently that of a healthy, clean-minded man, who took no pains to conceal anything, received the world open-handedly, and treated it in the same way.

And this man had neglected his summons, and proposed to run the Golden Lilies without his advice! Mr. Kishu was not a resentful man and, to do him credit, did not have any silly scruples about the notions Murvale Eastman had propounded. What troubled him was the fact that the matter was attempted without his advice and consent first had and obtained. He liked the young minister very well indeed, and had looked forward to having him for a son-in-law with pleasant anticipation; but Wilton Kishu was always in the foreground of his thought, and he had no use for one who did not esteem that worthy one of the most essential features of the plan of creation. He very naturally felt angry at what seemed a slight to his dignity by this young man whom he had discovered and, out of sheer good will, made the pastor of the Golden Lilies, and as good as offered an alliance with his family.

He was not one, however, to do anything rashly. In all his life he had never struck a fair blow nor received one squarely which he could possibly avoid. He sat down upon a chair by the half-open door and thought what course it was best to pursue. Would he better join the opposition or come over to the side of the young iconoclast? He wished, not only to be on the winning side, but well up in front among the winners.

Could the young pastor win? That was the question. He went over in his mind all the forces that made for and against the ideas he had vaguely formulated. "Of course," he said to himself, "the rich will be against the view he takes, and the masses can always be bribed to use the power of numbers to their own detriment. It is done every day. Has not a shrewd politician declared to the committee of his party that 'politics is simply a question of which party has the most money?' Has not another defiantly asserted that an 'assessment of one-hundredth of one per cent. on the property of the millionaires of the country would secure them forever against legislation detrimental to their interests?'"

Ah, money is a wonderful power! A pound of gold will outweigh a thousand souls in the balance of earthly esteem, and the man who desires to win honor, exercise power, or achieve success—that man must be on the side of the most dollars. Gold can throttle enterprise, starve ambition, defy the strong, and crush the weak! Earthly weapons are vain against it. It can spike the cannon, make dull the sword, and quench the torch! It can make a man a king or a nation slaves. But there must be enough of it, and the slaves must be securely bound before their fears are excited. Had the time come when the few rich could defy the many poor? Was Plusius strong enough to prescribe terms to Penes?

Mr. Wilton Kishu thought of the elements of power in their hands. He had seen a good many figures on the subject, but somehow cast them all aside and rested his faith securely on one declaration of a profound philosopher: "No aristocracy was ever overthrown by popular power, unless it was too greedy or too careless to buy the support of the majority. As long as an aristocracy of wealth chooses to use its wealth to secure political ascendancy, the only enemy it need fear is the concentration of power in one man's hand. A monarchy may exist without an aristocracy; but a king is the only power that can overthrow a rich and determined aristocracy."

He mentally reviewed the growth of the money-power in the land within his own memory. It was nothing, even forty years ago, in comparison with the present. The States would hardly average a millionaire apiece in his boyhood, and now there were hundreds in a single city—perhaps a thousand! Then, nineteen-twentieths of the people lived on farms and in the small towns. It took a hundred hands to do the work one pair accomplished now; but there was little idleness, almost no want, and hardly crime enough to talk about. There were not many small farms in those days, and not nearly so many large ones as now; but the average was greater, and that was all that was needed to satisfy the public conscience. An average is a divine truth in political economy, no matter how great the lie it represents.

Mr. Kishu actually chuckled as he thought how Murvale Eastman's argument would be overthrown by wise men, armed with averages and aggregates, who were willing to work almost for nothing in order to win the approval of the over-rich. Given so many millions of people and so many billions of dollars, it means so many hundreds for every man, woman, and child in the land! What cause can there be for complaint while we have such averages and aggregates? So too with acres: so many for each. Yet now one-fifth of our population herd in great cities. Averages and aggregates would settle the thing; and the young pastor would soon find himself deserted even by his disciples. Such, he said to himself, has always been the outcome of attempts to restrict the power of the few and enlarge the opportunity of the many, and always will be.

Mr. Kishu's mind was made up. He would be against Murvale Eastman, not openly, but none the less effectively.

"Did you find anything?" asked the landlady, who, surprised at his long delay, had ventured to follow him.

"Nothing, nothing, madam," said Mr. Kishu, suavely. "It is very strange—very strange. Don't you think, Mrs. Kirkwood, that Mr. Eastman is acting—well, rather peculiarly, of late?"

"Indeed I do," responded the landlady warmly. "Here he just walked in on me Saturday night after tea, without a moment's warning, just as if he hadn't been out of town for two months and more. Of course, I was ready for him, but it looked as if he suspected me of letting his rooms to other parties while he was away. Then he had to send for me and ask, right before the servant, if I wouldn't have the hair-pins picked up in the room, as he had no use for them, and he didn't think they were exactly appropriate in a bachelor's apartment! I thought it was real—real inconsiderate," concluded the lady, excitedly smoothing out a plait in the front of her dress as she spoke.

"But I understood he had been in the city for some time," said Mr. Kishu.

"I don't know, I'm sure, where he's been. I never saw him until Saturday."

"And the rooms were quite unoccupied in his absence?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Kishu," smiling blandly. "Of course, I can't say the girls may not have gone in there occasionally, but as for occupying them—to *say* 'occupy' —that's all nonsense. Then, here this morning," she continued, "rushing off before it was light and leaving no word as to where he has gone or when he is coming back! I should say he *is* acting strangely! It seems as if everybody in the city wanted to see him, and everybody outside of it wanted to hear from him. Why, there's been no end of telegraph messages! Just look at that," she said, pointing to a pile of brown envelopes on the desk, "twenty-seven since breakfast! And that's another, I suppose," she added as the door-bell sounded again.

Somehow this confirmation of the pastor's absence had a peculiar effect on Mr. Kishu. He could not help feeling a sort of admiration for the man who could thus run away from his own renown. He was not altogether mercenary in his character; he loved success even more than wealth, and though the odds were all against the young pastor, he could not deny that these were indications of approval that might have flattered a much older man. He was none the less determined to oppose him; but decided, as he followed the voluble landlady down-stairs, to do it very cautiously. It might be that the time had come for making a start in the direction Murvale Eastman had indicated. If that were the case, of course there would be no use in trying to prevent it.

Mr. Kishu had a profound belief in Divine power. He had seen not a few miracles performed in his day. He remembered that even after he had reached man's estate, he had seen a mob raging through the streets of the city, seeking a man's life because he had spoken against the institution of slavery. And now for a quarter of a century there had not been a slave in all the land. He never doubted God's power to do *anything*, after that. The only question with him was whether the Lord was ready to have a particular thing done. Once convinced of that, Mr. Kishu was the last man to stand in the way. He believed in God with a sincere, unquestioning conviction, and counted it folly to resist the Divine purpose when the Deity was really in earnest about a thing.

On his way back to the office, he happened to think of the aunt on whose kindness Murvale Eastman's expectations of fortune depended. She was yet at the seashore, but he sent a telegram inquiring if she knew her nephew's whereabouts, and manifesting some solicitude in regard to him. He responded by letter to the reply received half an hour afterward, briefly excusing himself, by hinting that his inquiry was prompted by an anxiety for the welfare of his daughter; and was not at all surprised when an afternoon train brought the lady herself to ascertain the nature of her nephew's delinquency. She was fond and proud of the young man, but the jealousy of inherited wealth made her sensitive upon the subject he had chosen for the sermons of the coming year, and when she left Mr. Kishu's office, that worthy felt that victory was half-achieved—he had cut off the young pastor's reserve supplies! Hereafter, Murvale Eastman would have to depend entirely upon his own earnings unless he should recant. His salary as the pastor of the Golden Lilies was, of course, a liberal one, but would the church submit to the spoliation of its lilies? That was the question.

CHAPTER XIV.

"NUMBER FORTY-SIX."

"NUMBER FORTY-SIX!"

It was early morning, not yet light, and chilly for the season. The drivers of the Belt and Cross-Cut Metropolitan Railway were gathering at the great stables on the corner of Hickory Street and Jackson Avenue, where twenty-five hundred horses were housed and fed and three hundred cars kept in a sufficiently poor condition to make the public feel how completely they were at the mercy of the Belt and Cross-Cut line. The drivers were waiting with dinner-pails in hand, standing and squatting about in little groups on the wide expanse of track-cut pavement which constituted the car-shed. The stables, feed and cleaning rooms were all above. The superintendent's office was on the left of the entrance going in, and the time-keeper's lodge on the right. The feeders and cleaners were hard at work, and the horses for the early morning cars were being inspected by the foreman as they came down the long wharfway that led to the stalls.

The Belt and Cross-Cut Company were very proud of their horses, and had good reason to be. One of the leading members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was on its board of directors, all of whose members were broad-minded, liberal Christian gentlemen who would not tolerate over-working or under-feeding their dumb servitors. They had in their employ one of the most skillful veterinary surgeons of the country, whose recommendations as to feed, care, and working of their horses were implicitly observed. No one ever saw a lame horse go out of their palatial stables attached to a car; the rations were of the most nutritious character; the animals were fed six times a day, and never two successive days exactly the same things in the same order. They were curried and clipped by machinery, and no tired horse went to his stall muddy-footed or unblanketed. The hospital for the temporarily disabled was of a character to suit the requirements of the most fastidious equine invalid, while a green paddock forty miles back in the country was kept for the especial comfort of convalescents. The company boasted that they required of their beasts less work daily and treated them more liberally than any other horse-car company in the world. They did this for two reasons: first, because the managers thought it cruel and unmanly to overwork dumb brutes; and, second, because they had demonstrated that it was good policy to give them plenty of rest, abundant food, and careful attention. They lasted longer, were more reliable, better-tempered, and less apt to become diseased, if thus treated.

Every intelligent man approved these views. People sometimes hinted the wish that a similar enlightened policy obtained with regard to the cars the company used; but as their condition only affected the health and comfort of the passengers, they could hardly be expected to be as careful of them as of the stock they owned. Humanity which is based on profitable returns is not only the easiest to practice, but the one most likely to be popular with investors. In the present state of the law and medical science, it does not make a fig's difference with the treasury whether a street-car becomes a vehicle for contagion or not. The profits are just the same, and the cost of purification that ought to be done and is not is clear net gain. The managers are, of course, sorry that people sicken or die, but "business is business," and men and women must take their chances in this world, and this happens to be one of the chances.

Until the recent strike, the company had required its drivers to work from twelve to sixteen hours for a day's work, and had paid the very lowest wages at monthly intervals. None of the principles applied to their stock were regarded as applicable to their human servants. Even the most humane of the directors insisted upon this policy. They were not, he maintained, in any manner responsible for the health, comfort, morality, contentment, or longevity of the men whom they employed. Labor, he declared, is a mere commodity; so the text-books on political economy teach, and if that be true the managers were manifestly right. Being a commodity, the only just and natural method of regulating wages was, they contended, by "the universal and divine law of supply and demand." There could not be too much labor in the world, for the demand *must* always regulate the supply. Just how the rule operated was not exactly understood, but there was no doubt about the fact. If there was a surplus of labor at one point, or the price was too low to permit the laborer to live and support his family, he must go into some other business or take his labor to some other market.

How shall he get there? That was a question for the laborer; so the managers contended. The Belt and Cross-Cut Railway was merely a buyer in the labor-market. They offered wages enough to get their work done —that was all. How much could they afford to pay? That had nothing to do with the matter. The company was not organized for the benefit of the drivers and conductors, but for the advantage of the stockholders: the Belt and Cross-Cut was run on business principles. It is true they used the city's streets, and were given an exclusive privilege therein; but their cars were run for the stockholders, not for the city.

"Suppose the city should undertake to run the cars herself?" Just let her try it. The company had a charter—that is, a contract—allowing them to do almost anything they chose for a certain number of years; and they could not be "beat" out of that unless paid, not only for their outlay, but for all they might make by any sort of exaction or by any avoidance of outlay during the pendency of the same. The city might perhaps require service of them, but they were themselves the sole judge in regard to the sort of service they should render. This was the law, they said, and they stood upon the law. They paid the market price for labor—that is, enough to get men to run their cars. If the men weren't satisfied with the wages, let them go where they could do better.

This was the position of the directors of the Belt and Cross-Cut Company on the "labor question." The superintendent was a graduate of West Point, the school at which the republic educates an aristocracy to command her armies, which makes the private soldier's lot in them so unendurable to a self-respecting man that one in every ten deserts yearly. The superintendent was what is termed a rigid disciplinarian, hard as granite and cold as ice.

There were two classes of people in the world, according to his ideas: "gentlemen" and "men." In the army these classes correspond to "officers" and "enlisted men;" in civil life to those who live by the profits on others' labor, and those who subsist by their own. He was a very efficient man, who applied the principles of his employers to the management of their affairs with scrupulous exactness. Since the recent strike he had made it a rule to be at the stables every morning when the day-cars started out. There were still mutterings of discontent among the men, and he did not propose to let it ripen into revolt again. Every man who showed signs of insubordination would be discharged. The company wanted no unwilling servants.

"Number Forty-six!" bawled the sleepy clerk, coming out into the shed with a pen behind his ear, and addressing a crowd of drivers who were waiting for their teams. A young man who was squatting against the wall beside the outgoing track in conversation with three or four others, rose and answered the hail.

"The superintendent wants you," said the clerk snappishly.

The young man took up his dinner-pail and started toward the office. He walked briskly but not hurriedly, and wore a pair of brown glasses as if to protect his eyes.

"Hurry up!" shouted the clerk. "Do you think the superintendent can wait all day?"

"He'll wait until I get there, won't he?"

"Not much he won't. We don't hire men to move at that gait around here."

"That's so, partner," said one of the other drivers. "You're a new hand, or you'd have known that 'the colonel' learned double-quicking at West Point, and don't allow any common-time movements when a man's on duty. You can go home as slow as you're a-mind to if you don't get asleep on the way; but when he or his under-strappers speak you're expected to 'git up and dust!'"

The young man, who was now half-way across the shed, neither accelerated his step nor seemed at all disturbed by these remarks. As he came up, the irate clerk repeated:

"Did you hear what I said? The superintendent wants you."

"If you think he is very impatient, you might run on and tell him I'm coming," said the young man pleasantly.

"Don't give me any of your lip," blustered the clerk. "You'll get a fiver on it if you do!"

"Don't try anything of that kind, my friend," answered the man. "You can't afford to lose a week's work."

The clerk made no answer, but turned on his heel, and entering the office said in a deferential tone:

"Here's Number Forty-six, sir."

"Good-morning," said the young man with the dinner-pail.

"Are you Number Forty-six?" asked the superintendent, turning sharply on the new-comer. It was a way he had learned at West Point and he considered it very effective in maintaining discipline.

"That's not my name," answered the young man good-humoredly.

"Who cares about your name? Are you driver Number Forty-six in the employ of the Belt and Cross-Cut Railway Company?"

"Really, I do not know, sir, and care as little about it as you do about my name."

"Don't know! Weren't you given a card, and told that the company knew no names, but kept the accounts with its men by numbers?"

"I think I was."

"And what have you done with it?"

"I am sure I don't know, sir."

"Don't you intend to comply with the company's rules?"

"I have done the company's work faithfully, but am not aware that this fact gives its officials a right to change my name or assign me a number as they do their horses, or as a prisoner is served in the penitentiary."

"See here, young man, it's your business to do the company's work, not to criticise its methods," said the superintendent severely.

"I know of no reason why I should not do both," rejoined the other with a smile.

"Well, you can't do it here," retorted the manager angrily.

"I think I can," was the reply, with a pleasant and amiable intonation.

"You do! Well, I'd like to know on what you base your opinion?"

"I am a free American citizen, who has the right to be addressed by his own name, and no gentleman will think of giving him any other designation."

"Do you mean to be impudent?" asked the manager.

"On the contrary, I was trying to be polite."

"I have half a mind to kick you out of the office."

"I am glad it is only half a mind."

"Why?"

"Because it would not be wise to undertake it."

"Ross!" to the clerk. "Tell the foreman to come here—immediately."

The clerk started to perform his errand.

"Better not set your bully on me, Mr. Temple," said the young man coolly.

"Why not?"

"Because you will be out of a job before night if you do."

"I!"

"You, sir."

"What do you mean? Who are you, anyhow?"

"I am the man who saved the life of the president of this company from the mob, and for whom he has advertised ever since."

"The devil!" exclaimed the superintendent.

"Oh, I hope not."

"Well, I'm sure," said the other apologetically, "no harm was intended by the number business. It's just a custom of the company—merely for convenience, you know."

"It is a most debasing custom and a very inconvenient one, an injustice to the drivers and an inconvenience to the accountants. Viewed from the men's standpoint it is only an arrogant display of power."

"You had better say that to the president," said the superintendent, smiling.

"I intend to do so," replied the other. "I have an appointment with him at twelve, and was about to come and ask you to put some one else on my run."

"For the afternoon, I suppose? Very well."

"I shall have to ask you to make it permanent," answered the young man.

"Ah, you've got another job? Never mind, Mike," to the foreman, "I shall not need you. You may get your breakfast now, Ross."

"Let me know when my car is ready, if you please, Mr. Kennedy," said Number Forty-six.

"All roight, sorr," answered the bruiser-foreman respectfully.

"See here, Mr.——excuse me, I have forgotten your name," said the superintendent, "I like you. Could you be induced to come into the office here? We need just such a man."

"I could hardly give up my present place for it."

"What is that?"

The young man put his hand in his pocket, took out a card, and handed it to the superintendent.

The latter glanced from the card to the face of the man who confronted him, flushed, whistled, and exclaimed:

"Well, I will—be—*blessed!*"

"I certainly hope you may," said the other, with a laugh.

"I hope you will say nothing to the president about our interview."

"Certainly not, if you will agree not to mention it to any one else."

"It's a bargain."

The two men shook hands, good-humoredly.

"By the way," said the driver, "as a matter of policy I would abolish the numbers. A man likes to be called Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith, or even Jones or Smith, but he doesn't like to be called 'Number Forty-six!' It's hard enough to be a driver, without being addressed as a jail-bird."

"Here's yer car, sorr," shouted the foreman at the door.

"Thank you, Mr. Kennedy," said the young man as he turned to go.

"Well, good-day," said the superintendent. "I guess you're right, sir; but I hate to see you take that car out."

"Oh, that's all right—my last trip, you know."

"Number Forty-six" took the reins from the helper with a word of thanks, stepped on the platform, dinner-pail in hand, shook the lines and drove out of the shed, whistling shrilly to a truckman who was obstructing his track.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EYES OF ARGUS.

A HALF-DOZEN men sat at as many small tables in a long bare room writing steadily. An arc light hung over each table. There was a sharp whistle at one of a set of speaking-tubes at the end of the room.

"See what the 'old man' wants, won't you, Searle?" said a man at the farther end of the room, glancing up from his work. "You seem to be the only one that has nothing to do."

The young man thus addressed had been sitting for some time with his feet on one of the tables, rolling a piece of paper carefully about his pencil and then unrolling it, only to repeat the process again, in the mean time whistling softly.

"It will give you a chance to rest that whistle, too," said the man who sat next to him, a big-shouldered, big-headed fellow with brown hair, close-clipped, which stood out from his head in all directions, whose pencil flew over his paper with a furious haste, as if it required the full force of the muscular hand to push it.

"Never mind, Flagler," answered Searle, while he rose and kicked a chair out of his way as he sauntered toward the speaking-tube. "The fact that you can't tell the difference between an aria from the latest opera and the snore of a hippopotamus shouldn't make you object to a little music. If the rest of us don't complain of your trotting that thirty-two foot on a squeaky boot you ought not to say anything about our little peculiarities."

"Don't stop him," said another. "Flagler can't work unless he pumps his ideas by foot power. He served a term on the treadmill when they had him in 'quod' for choking his grandmother. It didn't cure his stubbornness, but he got a habit of working his heels whenever his brain is a little empty, which we all know is pretty often."

Flagler, who had been leaning forward in his chair, his feet balanced on the toes, busily working them back and forth unconscious of the squeak, suddenly ceased his customary movement, thereby starting a laugh at his expense, though no one stopped work even to look up. By this time Searle had reached the speaking-tube, which he opened and lazily called:

"Hello!"

There was an indistinct rumble in the tin tube and Searle said, without looking around:

"Burrows, the 'old man' wants to know if you got the Rev. Eastman?"

"Thought likely," replied a dark-haired, sharp-faced young man at one of the tables who held an unlighted cigar in his mouth, and had an unsatisfied frown on his brow. "Tell him I didn't," sharply.

Searle applied his mouth again to the tube.

"Better come and explain it yourself, Burrows," he said a moment after. "His hair is beginning to curl and he is talking in a very familiar strain about his particular friend."

"Hasn't got to the devil so soon, has he?" asked the first speaker. "Better go, Burrows; he'll blow the mouthpiece off next."

"Hurry up, Burrows," said Searle languidly. "He wants to know why you didn't get him—'best-known man in the city'—'Boston and Chicago papers full of him'—'better hire a dog to lead you about the streets'—'couldn't find the City Hall, could you?' You see he's working himself up.

"All right, sir; he's coming. Will be here as soon as he can slip his ear-pads on and get past Flagler's feet; here he is."

Searle let the spring loose, shutting off reply, and handed the tube to Burrows.

A laugh went around the room, and the elderly man who had spoken first said, seriously:

"Better lookout, Searle; the 'old man' won't stand fooling with. You'll wake up some day to find he has concluded to take a tearful farewell of you and your jokes."

"Not while the *Morning Breeze* gets my invaluable services at the present moderate figure," answered Searle coolly, as he reseated himself on the table and resumed his former attitude.

Percy W. Searle was one of the most valuable men on the *Morning Breeze*, and knew that fact, as did all of his co-laborers. A slender, blue-eyed, quiet man, considerably under the average size; pale-faced and of delicate, almost dull, expression, he was one of the last men an ordinary observer would have selected for a city reporter. Added to this were the seeming disqualifications of inability to take stenographic notes and never being in a hurry. But he knew the city from end to end; never made any mistakes as to his route; was acquainted with nearly everybody worth knowing; never talked about his business; had a memory as hard to rub a fact out of as a steel plate; wielded a caustic pen, but never got himself or his paper into difficulties; never made any serious blunders; was always ready to undertake anything required, and seldom failed to accomplish what he undertook. He was popular with his associates, simply because he never blabbed; was accommodating, quiet, and generally accounted dangerous to meddle with.

The roaring at the speaking-tube still continued, and presently Burrows left the room to go up-stairs and explain his failure, face to face with the "old man."

One by one, while this had been in progress, the other men had finished their work, all but one at least, and had rushed to the slide hole, thrust their copy into a box, slipped it into a pneumatic tube, and it had been whisked away to the managing editor's room. One after another they lighted their cigars and awaited that functionary's pleasure.

"What's the matter, Searle? You don't seem to be brisk to-night. I'm afraid the *Breeze* won't be very stiff in the morning, so far as you are concerned."

"About as dry a half-column as I ever wrote, but I'll bet a suit of clothes it'll be read by more people than any other bit of work in it."

"I'll take that," said the heavy-set man, with a sneer on his face, who was still at work.

"How's this, Jones? Have you got something good?"

"Juicy," answered the worker sententiously.

"And you're doing it up in your best style?" asked another blandly.

"You bet."

"Then I'll go 'hav'vers' with Searle," said the other.

The retort brought a laugh, but Jones worked on steadily.

"What is it, Jonesey? Tell us now," asked the rollicking young fellow, who seemed inclined to banter the one belated worker.

"All about the Reverend Eastman," answered Jones, with a grin.

"Have you seen him?"

"No; but I know where he is."

"You do?" chorus from all the others.

"I do that; and I've seen *her*."

"Is there a woman in it?"

"There isn't anything else," exultantly.

"Well, that *is* a soft snap. How'd you get onto it, Jonesey?"

The writer tapped his head and winked.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" groaned the others in discordant unison.

"Why, that's the very thing Burrows is 'taking his medicine' up-stairs for not getting hold of."

Jones shrugged his shoulders.

"And you mean to say that you found it, traced it out, discovered it, Jonesey?" asked the boyish tease. "Bet you a dozen a newsboy put you up to it."

"Oh, no," said another; "Jones stepped on a banana peel and sat down on it."

"No, sir, I tracked him to his hole, myself."

"Must have been a pretty strong scent if *you* found it."

"Of course, I didn't find it exactly—not to say *find*, that is—for it wasn't my detail. I just stumbled across it."

Another chorus of "Ohs!"

"Own up now, Jonesey, and tell who it was put you up to it."

"Well, I got a hint—just a hint, you know—from old Kishu."

"You did? Well you *are* fresh. Didn't you know that if Kishu had anything worth giving away he'd give it to the *Thunderbolt?* Why, man, he's got stock in the *Thunderbolt*, and no man ever knew how to butter his own bread better than Wilton Kishu. You'd better be mighty shy about what you get from him."

"Oh, he didn't mean to give it away—nothing of the kind. He just let it slip accidentally and I caught on to the clew and followed it up, that's all."

"Accidentally, eh?" said Searle sarcastically. "Now, Jones, you aren't half a bad fellow, though I believe, on my soul, you'd like to be, or at least have others think you were, but you seem to have no more idea of human nature than a pig of aërostatics. Don't you know that Wilton Kishu never does anything by accident? Why, man, he parts his hair with a compass, and never draws a breath without stopping to consider whether it would be better to breathe or not to breathe. He's a very good sort of a man—I've nothing to say against him, but nothing ever *happens* with him; he never does a thing by impulse. He wouldn't know himself if he should make such a break."

"Come now, I think you're too hard on Kishu," said Jones, stopping his work and turning with his elbows on the arms of his chair. "I think he's a real good fellow."

"Tell us all about it, Jonesey, that's a dear," said Marsh, his smooth-faced, curly-haired tormentor, who was stretched out on one of the tables. He kissed his fingers to Jones as he spoke, and though the others roared, Jones, the chronic blunderer of the office, was too good-natured to be angry. In fact, nobody was ever angry with Marsh, and the rollicking scapegrace had saved the blundering fellow from so many *contretemps* that he began to distrust his firmest conviction when the saucy Adonis chose to ridicule what he had undertaken.

"Go on, Jonesey! Out with it! He's evidently come the confidential-sympathetic dodge on you, and you have bolted him, hair, watch-chain, and all."

Mr. Kishu's hair was of a silky black, always parted with the utmost precision, falling in an unbroken wave over his little ears, the lobes of which were just visible below it, and curling smoothly under seemed to have its ends evenly tucked into the crease between two fatty rolls of his short neck. His fob-chain was a wide ribbon of gold links from which hung a locket containing on one side the likeness of his daughter and on the other, it was said, that of a prince who had once honored him by accepting his hospitality for a month and leaving with him several of his lordly I. O. U.s at his departure. The dissolute lord, no doubt, thought he had outwitted the snobbish American, but Wilton Kishu knew exactly what he was getting and was well satisfied with his bargain. He kept the I. O. U.s more from force of habit than anything else; never expecting payment, but not knowing when they might be convenient in securing complaisance on the part of the Prince of Moraydin. Mr. Kishu had a wide acquaintance abroad which he had secured by liberal investments of money and self-respect, and was regarded in more than one foreign capital as one of the few Americans who had a just estimate of the immense superiority of the lordling over the simple citizen of the republic. In fact, he made the lordlings instruments to enhance his own importance in the eyes of his countrymen. His snobbery was entirely of the inferential kind. He said nothing on which his foreign guests could base their conclusions, but loaded them with gifts and took care never to contravene anything they said about themselves or his country. By this means, he managed to have his countrymen see him as reflected in the favor of his foreign patrons. It was a shrewd way to secure a unique distinction, that of being hand-in-glove with distinguished foreigners ; a device which neither those who contributed to its success nor those who were dazzled by its results ever dreamed of suspecting.

"You might as well tell us, Jones," said Mather, the one middle-aged man who, by virtue of a streak of gray in his black whiskers, seemed to assume the post of dean of this convocation of scribbling gossips. "You know you're apt to put your foot in it whenever you try to do anything startling. You do very well on plain work, there's no denying that, but when you try fancy figures, you're always in danger of a bad fall."

"See here, fellows," said Jones desperately. "You're all wrong; I know you are, but just for the fun of the thing, I'll tell you all about it."

"That's right, Jonesey, tell it all—tell it all—tell it all," squealed Marsh, imitating a parrot's crackling tones with wonderful accuracy.

"You shut up, Pretty Poll, or I'll throw an inkstand at you," exclaimed Jones, beginning to show irritation.

"Go on, Jones, I'll shut his wind off for you," said Flagler, reaching over and drawing Marsh's head and shoulders off the table and into his lap, where the fair-faced boy lay, puffing smoke into his captor's face. The giant ran his fingers through the boy's curly locks and petted him as if he had been a girl, while Jones told his story.

"Well, you see, fellows, I was going along past Kishu's office in a good bit of a hurry, for I had the City Hall and the Post Office to do and it was getting on toward three o'clock, so I had no time to lose. It seems he saw me, for I hadn't gone half a block before his private secretary——"

"Goggles, you mean?" interrupted Searle.

"I mean that lame fellow he has so kindly given employment to," answered Jones with some asperity.

"At about half what he's worth—that's right—go on."

"Why doesn't he go somewhere else, then, where he can get more?"

"Exactly the question half the workers in the country are asking about themselves to-day, Jones. I happen to know in this case; but don't stop to ask conundrums—go on."

"Well, the secretary said——"

"Oh, never mind what he said: we all know. We've had him grabbing our coat-tails as if he hadn't strength to go an inch farther and gulping out his words as if there was a premium on air: 'Mr. Kishu is very sorry—but really—if you have a minute to spare——'" Searle mimicked the secretary as well as he had the managing editor, and the crowd burst into a laugh as they saw in Jones's puzzled face a confirmation of the snarling cynic's guess.

"Well," said Jones with a droll expression, "if you know so much about this story, hadn't you better go on and tell it? You can beat me."

"Can't go any farther," answered Searle. "for I can't imagine what on earth the old spider wanted of you."

"That's just what puzzled me; but I'd hardly got inside the door when he out with it. The fact is, he was so worried he didn't half-know what he was saying."

"Well, what was he saying?"

"He wanted to know, the very first thing, if anybody had found him."

"Found whom?"

"That's just what I asked. 'Why, found Eastman—the Reverend Eastman,' he answered. He said all the reporters in the city were on track of him, and he knew if one had found where he was they'd all know it, and so called me in to inquire. He was so anxious and troubled about him that he couldn't wait. You know, he just runs the Golden Lilies."

"Keep your tenses right, Jones—*has* run it, you mean," interrupted Searle.

"Yes, and will keep on running it, if this fellow Eastman doesn't smash it up entirely."

"You're strong on facts, Jones, but don't prophesy. That's your weak point. Go on."

"Well, it seems nobody had been able to find him all day. Kishu had been to his boarding-house, and was shown into his room. The landlady said he left before daylight this morning, and nobody's seen hide nor hair of him since."

"That's all straight so far. We didn't need any of old Kishu's palaver to find that out."

It was Burrows who spoke, snappishly enough, too. The "medicine" he had taken evidently had not agreed with him.

"True enough," said Jones eagerly, "but Kishu went into his room, and something he saw there—he didn't tell me what it was—satisfied him there was a woman in the case—in fact, that she had been in that very room, though the landlady assured him not a soul had entered it for two months until the minister came in Saturday night. This naturally troubled him. You know there's been some talk about his daughter and this Eastman. He says there's nothing in it; but it troubles him all the same. It seems the minister was heard to make an engagement yesterday with a strange woman. From the description I knew at once it was a Mrs. Sandford, who has been stopping at the Glenmore for some weeks. I tried to work her up once, when things were dull in the dog-days; but all I could find out was that she was a client of Metziger, who came to see her at the hotel now and then. It seems that Eastman's aunt has got wind of the matter, too, and had just been up to see if Kishu could tell her anything about the delinquent, who, instead of being off yachting, as everybody supposed, turns out to have been hiding here in the city for a month past. Now, if that isn't enough to start a fellow, what is?"

Jones looked around on his auditors as if challenging denial.

"Well—you started," said Searle.

"That's about all I did do, too," answered Jones, "for luck put the key of the situation in my hand before I had gone five blocks. I was trying to decide what I should do next, when what should I see but a cab stopping just ahead of me. As I came up I saw Metziger get out and help this very lady and a child to alight. They went up the steps, he opened the door with a pass-key, and they all went in. Presently a servant came out, took some parcels from the cab, paid the driver and dismissed him. After a while, Metziger reappeared and stopped a moment in the door, giving some directions to the servant. I wasn't near enough to hear the first of them, but the last was to admit no one who didn't bring a written order from him, except the Reverend Mr. Eastman! Now, what do you think of that?"

"Jonesey," exclaimed Marsh, wriggling himself around on Flagler's lap, so as to face the narrator, "Jonesey, shake! Blessed if it don't look as if you had finally treed game worth watching. You dear old lunkhead, I congratulate you!"

"Oh, it's being watched—no trouble about that," said Jones enthusiastically, "and I'm expecting word every minute that the Reverend Eastman has been run in where he can be found when he's wanted.'

"You went back and told Kishu what you had learned, I suppose," said Searle quietly.

"I thought it wouldn't be any more than fair," admitted Jones reluctantly.

"Of course. Well, you've let the *Thunderbolt* in for as nasty a mess as it's had to swallow in some time."

"What do you mean? Do you know anything about this woman?"

"Not a word. Never heard of her before, but the *Thunderbolt* ——"

"Ah, he promised it should be credited to the *Breeze*, all fair and square," interrupted Jones.

"He did!" exclaimed Searle, springing to his feet, his eyes flashing with exultation. "Jones, you've done it! Your fortune's made! You'll be on the way to Europe inside of twenty-four hours! Good pay and expenses, for six months at least! You've struck a bonanza! Have your grip packed and be ready!"

"That won't take long," said Jones with a shrug. "Do you think the *Thunderbolt* will make a place for me?"

"The *Thunderbolt!* You dunderhead. The *Thunder-*

bolt would give a thousand dollars for your scalp before the ink is dry on their morning's issue! Oh, my, what a sell! Give me your copy, Jones, every bit of it! Never mind what I want of it. You've made your Jack!"

There was no more languor among the group of reporters; every one was awake now.

"What do you know about the matter, Searle?" asked Marsh, with childish eagerness. "Have you stumbled on a soft snap, too?"

"I have had the best and the worst luck to-day I ever heard of, and have made the most unexpected and most unfortunate 'scoop' of my life."

"Stop!" exclaimed Flagler, "a 'scoop' may be unexpected, but never unfortunate. Here's Jones's, now——"

"He hasn't made any 'scoop;' he's *been* 'scooped.' That's where his luck comes in," said Searle. "He's made a big strike by being 'scooped;' I've made a stupendous 'scoop' and saved the *Breeze* from nobody knows how much trouble; and I won't get a cent for it. Confound the luck!"

"What is it, Petrus?" asked Marsh. "Have you found Tascott?"

"Or Murvale Eastman?" added Burrows.

"Gentlemen," said Searle excitedly, "I've been with Murvale Eastman for four hours this very day, and know all about his life during the past month—and the devil of it is, I can't say a word about it!"

"That *is*—a—go!" said Flagler seriously.

"Who is she?" piped Marsh.

"Strangest of all, fellows," continued Searle gravely, "there isn't any woman in it, nor any wrong—only just the simplest bit of straightforward manliness I have run across in a long time."

"Go for him, Jonesey!" shouted Marsh. "You never were as 'fresh' as that."

"Hush, baby!" said Searle, playfully putting his hand over Marsh's mouth. "Don't say anything more. You're sure to be sorry for it if you do."

"Well, I don't understand it yet," said Jones ruefully. "What are you talking about, anyhow?"

There was a burst of laughter from the others, with cries of "Put him out!" "Bind up his head!" "Put a cabbage leaf on his mouth!" and other sarcastic speeches.

"Wait until I see the 'old man' a few minutes, and I'll tell you, boys," said Searle as he opened the door, and they heard him going up the stairs, three steps at a time. Five minutes afterward a call came down the speaking-tube to the effect that there would be special work for every man in the office, and that no reporter must leave the building on any account.

This meant extra pay, according to the rules of the office, and all were well satisfied with the arrangement.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOO NATURAL FOR "REALISM."

"JONESEY has told his story," said Marsh after Searle's return, "now, Searle, let us have yours."

"Well, gentlemen, if I tell you what I have seen to-day, you will understand that I am in honor bound not to use it, professionally, or I should have had a couple of columns in type before this time and Jones would have been spared the trouble of working up his material, and of course you will have to receive it on the same terms."

"What does he take us for?" asked Burrows.

"The honor of a reporter!" exclaimed Marsh as he blew a cloud of smoke in Flagler's face.

"All right, little one," said Searle approvingly. "We all know you've got it. There's no knight-errant of the quill can be trusted with a secret more securely than the 'blushing baby of the *Breeze*.'"

"Hear! hear!" cried the others with a laugh.

"Fellows," said Marsh with serio-comic gravity, releasing himself from Flagler's arms and sitting upright on the table, "to ease the conscience of Mr. Searle, I propose that we take a solemn oath never to reveal the secrets he may impart. Hold up your right hands, gentlemen! Shut your right eyes! Now, *in nomine Polypheme*, you do solemnly swear not to speak, write, or indite any of the things you may hear, under penalty of having your sole remaining peeper put into everlasting mourning. S'help ye Sullivan, Hyer, *et id omne genus*. Go on, Bubo, I've tied their tongues and palsied their hands. You can croak to your heart's content now. Your honor is safe in their keeping. But do hurry; we're getting sleepy!"

The frolicsome boy—for Marsh was one of those men who never outgrow their boyhood—closed his eyes, emitted a snore, and fell back into Flagler's arms.

"Now, gentlemen," continued Searle, "if Flagler will choke the boy, I'll tell you a bit of hard-pan fact, which if a novelist should use he would have the whole pack of so-called 'realists' at his heels before the ink was dry on his pages. You see, the 'realist' is always ready to believe anything mean; but anything decent and manly he declares at once to be unnatural. We, who see life as it is, know that it is just as silly to premise that all men are bad as that all are good. But I did not mean to moralize.

"You know I was sent by special request of Tabor, the president of the Belt and Cross-Cut Line, to report a little surprise party he was going to give his board of directors to-day. I worked the company's end of the strike, you may remember, and did something, they thought, to bring about a settlement. As this was to be one of the few pleasant things growing out of it, he wanted I should come and report how handsomely the company could acknowledge favors when disposed to do so.

"You remember while the strike was on, a mob suddenly sprang out of the ground one day and turned its head toward the company's stables at Jackson Street and Hickory Avenue, with the amiable intention of burning them to the ground. They were, of course, the most salient point of attack, and I could never quite understand why they were left unguarded. The police were all busy, it is true, guarding the cars the 'scabs' were trying to run, and had their hands pretty full at that. I suppose very few of the men live near the stables, and the chief trouble, it seemed to be anticipated, would occur in the crowded down-town thoroughfares. Up to that time, the new drivers had met with no difficulty until they reached Fifth Street, more than a mile away from the car-sheds. So there was next to nothing to prevent the mob from doing as they liked at the stables. I had just gone up to interview Tabor about the damage done to his track and cars, when a clerk ran in to tell him the mob were coming to the stables, and advise him to slip out the back way which opens on Fifty-ninth Street, while there was an opportunity.

"I never had much opinion of Tabor until that day—thought he was a good enough fellow, but had no idea there was any sand in him. You know he is a little butter-ball sort of a chap, whom one naturally expects to reach his highest level in concocting a salad or cultivating some amiable fad. But if he flinched a hair that day I didn't see it, and I believe you will admit I'm a pretty fair judge of nerve."

"O, a man that's had six weeks in Bedlam can claim anything he chooses in that line," said Marsh.

A flush came upon Searle's face, for he had won fame and a foremost place in his profession at the same time, by having himself sent to an insane asylum and, after a few weeks, being released by legal process and recounting his experience.

"It never seemed to me that lay required so much nerve as it did brain," said Jones. "I could never see how Searle thought of just the right things for a crazy man to do. I'm sure I couldn't."

"Jones—*ey!*" exclaimed Marsh, springing up excitedly. "Don't, for pity's sake, don't overload us with unbolted fact! We all know *you* couldn't do it—it isn't likely any of the rest of us could—but you had no business to imperil Searle's life by absolutely compelling him to blush. It's too great a strain on his nervous system."

Flagler's big hand closed about the shapely throat and crowded the curly head back upon his knee.

"As I said, Tabor didn't flinch," continued Searle with a smile. "The Belt and Cross-Cut had good reason to be proud of their president that day. He stood by his trust like a man. I went out with him, not intending to stand by him at all, but just to see the fun. The mob was taking the whole broad street to itself. You've most of you seen such crowds from the rear or the flanks, but it is when coming head on, like a mad bull, that it impresses one most. There was a solid mass of two or three thousand, I should think, in the middle of the street, not running, but pushing on in that panting walk which shows determination as well as haste. It is evident that they had made a forced march, and that the plan was a deliberate one. I told Tabor there was no use of trying to stop them; but the man was deaf. He said they never should touch the property until they had killed him. Those in the middle of the street were nearly all men, sturdy, black-browed, sweaty fellows, who looked as if nothing short of annihilation would balk their purpose. The crowd on the sidewalk was a little behind the center and very noisy. There were a good many women and hoodlums among them. The front of the column was clear—I remember noticing as an anomaly that the small boy did not head the procession—the only one I ever saw which he did not at least keep up with.

"There were a dozen or so of us about Tabor, mostly in his rear, and all ready to retreat at a moment's notice; but he stood his ground just where the tracks turn out of the street, and forbade the rioters coming any farther. He might just as well have talked to a tidal wave. They told him to get out of the way, and when he did not, opened on him with stones and brickbats, without so much as pausing to parley. Tabor went down at the first fire, fortunately for him and all hands. He wasn't hurt much—just stunned and given a beauty-spot I think he's prouder of to-day than anything else he possesses.

"The black crest of the angry wave was within ten steps of us. I drew my pistol and stooped down to drag

Tabor off. Just as he fell somebody called out his name. It was like a spark in a powder magazine. I think every tongue in that struggling mass of hate reeked with curses when they heard it. I knew they would kill him if they laid hands on him, and so kept tugging away to get him back into the office. The stones flew pretty thick, and I think there were some shots fired at me. I had just made up my mind to return the fire when some one grasped my arm, wrenched my pistol away and threw it across the street, at the very feet of the mob. A shout went up as they saw me disarmed.

"'Go!' said the man who had robbed me, in a stern whisper. 'Leave me to deal with them!'

"'But——' said I, glancing at Tabor.

"'Go!' he repeated. 'My life for his! You only increase the danger!'

"I turned and ran back to the stables, not at all sorry to be relieved. Here I found that Kennedy and a few of the men who stood by the company, or more probably dare not try to get away, had closed the gates, were turning the horses loose, and getting out the hose. I went through the office into the yard and asked Kennedy what it meant. He said that at the last minute they intended to turn the hose on the horses and when they became thoroughly frightened, open the gates and let them dash out upon the crowd.

"'Who told you to do this?' I asked.

"'The man out there,' said Kennedy.

"'And who is he?' I asked.

"'Divil a bit do I know; some of the perlice fellers, I take it!'

"It was a terrible idea to turn more than a thousand maddened horses against that human wave, but there was no doubt it would be effective. The man who proposed it had not only sense, but sand as well.

"My curiosity about this matter made me miss the speech the man who was standing guard over Tabor made to the crowd. I think some of you reported it *in extenso* the next morning; perhaps Marsh,—he was *supposed* to have been there, you know."

There was a laugh at the expense of the curly-headed Adonis, whose protest was drowned in a gurgle by Flagler's throttling clasp.

"I've no doubt the report was substantially true, though until to-day I have been inclined to think it mythical. It seems that a good portion of the crowd recognized this man, especially the women, who are always the hardest part of a mob to deal with, though nobody knew who he was or anything about him beyond the fact that his name was Merrill. He had taken great interest in the strikers, and was said to have visited the home of every one of them and assisted the most needy. While approving the strike, he discountenanced violence, but counseled firmness in their demand. He had somehow managed to create a general impression that he was able to do much more than he promised or even intimated. When, therefore, he commanded them to halt, and accused them of folly and cowardice, he spoke with the authority of one whom they knew to be a friend. He did not deal in soft words with them, either, but rated them, as near as I can learn, in good sound fool's English, the chief beauty of which was that there wasn't too much of it.

"The trouble in dealing with mobs usually is that men want to make speeches to them. That is not the way. A few words that sting and burn; and then something must be done or proposed to turn them from their purpose. This man hardly used ten sentences, they say, but I have no doubt that he put into them all that Marsh crowded into half a column of eloquence and more too."

"Oh! Oh!" groaned the reckless culprit.

"Give it to him, Searle," said Jones. "He deserves it all, and more than he'll ever get. He's a disgrace to the craft! I remember that speech. He got a deal of credit for his courage in reporting it, and now it turns out he wasn't there at all; it was just a 'fake' of the thinnest sort."

"As I was saying," continued Searle, "the stranger did not give them any time to recover from their surprise. Calling three or four of the leaders by name, he told them if they did not wish to be prosecuted for murder, and really wanted to gain the object of the strike, to pick up the president and take him into the office. The rest he ordered to disperse at once. Then he turned his back on them and helped bring Tabor in.

"Well, they obeyed him; carried Tabor as tenderly as if he had been a baby, and dispersed without having done any harm and in reasonably good-humor. It was one of the finest things I ever knew. Before we realized what he had done the man was gone. The matter attracted no attention because he made no fuss about it; but I doubt if there is another man in the city who could have done it. That night a thousand dollars was put in the hands of a select committee of the strikers, to be used for the benefit of needy families. None of them would tell, if they knew, where it came from, but everybody attributed it to the man who had headed off the mob. As you will remember, in a few days the strike was settled. The settlement was in the main due to the letters of this man to the board of directors, and also to the committee of the strikers—plain, business-like, sensible letters, which made it easy for the two parties to deal with each other.

"Now, the funny thing about it all is that nobody could find this man Merrill. The police hunted for him, the company advertised for him, and I spent some time myself in trying to get on his track. The men thought he was a workman, and got his money from the company; the company thought him a business man and a philanthropist. The police, I think, concluded he was a myth. As for me, I was much nearer the truth than any of them."

"What did you take him to be?" asked Flagler interestedly.

"Well, after I had hunted down all the Merrills in the city, and found none of them filled the bill, I was satisfied that he was working under an alias and concluded that he must be—a reporter!"

A mingled chorus of groans and laughter greeted this announcement.

"Who solved the riddle finally?" asked the irrepressible Jones, when the clamor attending Searle's last statement had subsided.

"Nobody," answered Searle quietly, "it solved itself. Tabor had a letter from the stranger the other day, saying that if agreeable he would like to see the members of the board of directors at their regular monthly meeting. Of course it was agreeable, and it was to report this meeting that Tabor sent for me to-day. The board meets at twelve o'clock, and promptly at that hour, into the room where they sat expectant in all the dignity of corporate power, came one of the company's drivers! Tabor knew him only as 'Number Forty-six,' a driver who had attracted some attention by the fact that he took a man's place who was hurt by the strikers, and sent his earnings to the disabled man's family.

" But despite the colored glasses which he wore, I recognized him at a glance as the mysterious Merrill. As I told you, Tabor had laid himself out for a surprise-party on his own hypothesis that the unknown was some millionaire philanthropist who had a pet theory about labor and capital which he wished to ventilate. You may guess the surprise was on his side when he found that the man to whom he owed his life, and to whom the company were indebted for the saving of its property, was one of their own drivers, whom he had last met as a member of a committee of conference, sent by the employees to urge some further concessions on the company's part. The president was a little confused at first, but made his acknowledgments handsomely, both on his own behalf and for the company, and then asked what they could do to further express their gratitude, anticipating any request he might make by the statement that he was just the kind of a man they wanted in their employ, and if there was no suitable vacancy, they would make one for him. He concluded by asking the man plumply if he would take the place of assistant superintendent, an office he was sure the board would gladly create in order to testify their appreciation of his services. All the other members made haste to give their approval to Tabor's bright, offhand proposal; which was not strange, for the man had as little self-consciousness as if he had been in such august company all his life. He thanked them pleasantly; said he was glad to have served them acceptably, but, as he was about to leave their employ he had come, not to ask anything for himself, but if they would not consider it an intrusion, to have a few moments' talk with them about the strike and things connected with it.

"Of course they could not refuse so modest a request, and Tabor very heartily insisted that he must not think of leaving—the company could not permit it—they stood ready to offer a salary which would make it impossible for him to refuse.

"The man thanked them again, and said that if he was at liberty to consult his own preferences he would like nothing better than to accept the proposal they had made. It was just the sort of work he would like, but, he added with a smile, he had another job on hand just now, which it would be impossible to relinquish, for a time, at least, so he would be obliged to decline their very flattering offer. Tabor insisted on knowing what the job was, and the young man, taking out a neat card-case, handed him one of his cards. It was better than a play to see Tabor and his associates as they passed that card from one to another. At the same time the young man removed his glasses, and there, disguised only by the absence of the mustache he has always worn, stood the Reverend Murvale Eastman!"

Despite the fact that some revelation concerning the pastor of the Golden Lilies had been promised at the outset, this announcement created a genuine surprise among the little group of hardened caterers for the newsmongering public.

"Had he really been driving a horse car?" asked Burrows as soon as he recovered his breath.

"Every day except Sundays for a month or more," answered Searle. "I've seen his time-cards, regularly punched and canceled, on file at the superintendent's office."

"Well, I vow!" exclaimed Jones.

"Think of it, fellows!" continued Searle; "here the man has gone by this very office from four to six times a day, on the front end of a car, carrying his parishioners back and forth, and not one of them has recognized him. While others were studying the strike from the outside, he went to work and studied it from the inside."

"He's certainly a brick," said Marsh. "I'm almost willing to forgive him for being in love with Lily Kishu."

"What is that to you, sauce-box?" asked Flagler, playfully snapping the ears of the young jester.

"What is it to me? Why, I'm jealous—if you must know. You see, I intend to marry her myself."

"You do!"

"Nothing less, Grumpy."

"Why, you dunce, Wilton Kishu wouldn't look at you!"

"I don't want him to; it's his daughter I want to look at me. But you're mistaken there. I'd make a much better son-in-law than this man Eastman with his newfangled notions. All Kishu would have to do with me would be to stick a check under my plate every Monday morning—just a reasonably fair allowance, you know—and I wouldn't be a bit more trouble for a week. He needs something docile and ornamental—just in my line, you see."

"Oh, shut up, rattle-pate," said Jones. "You know there's no more chance of your marrying Lilian Kishu than if she were the daughter of the Grand Mogul."

"Isn't, eh? Now, see here, I'll bet you a supper for the crowd I marry her before you get back from your European trip. What do you say?"

"Don't be silly, Marsh," said Mather reprovingly. "You go too far in your foolery sometimes."

"Do you take the bet?"

"No, sonny. I don't want your money, but I'll get you a pass to San Francisco and back on the wedding journey, whenever she consents."

"Shake!" said the young fellow, springing up and extending his hand. "That's one of the things that troubled me. It wouldn't do, you know, to go half across the continent and get stuck. I've always thought a wedding journey in two sections would be—well, rather unsatisfactory, you know."

"But how did the Reverend Car-driver get on with the board?" asked Flagler, again suppressing Marsh.

"Just as well as he did with the men," answered Searle, "and for the same reason—he did not assume anything. He merely said that for a month he had associated with the drivers, boarding with them, working with them, and studying their actual relations to the labor they performed, to their employers, and to society. He did not propose to teach the board their duties—did not assume to know what they ought to do. He merely desired to suggest some things that had occurred to him during his month or more of association and service with the company's employees."

"What were his notions on that subject?" asked Mather, the eldest of the company. "In view of his recent pulpit-utterances, it would be very interesting to know his views on such practical subjects. I suppose he dealt in glittering generalities of the gushy Gospel sort, which ministers insist should regulate the relations of Labor and Capital?"

"On the contrary," replied Searle, "his views were the plainest common-sense, expressed in the fewest possible words. He said he supposed the purpose of the company was to make the most out of its investment during the whole time of its charter with the least risk of loss, and that the object of its employees was to get as good wages as they could with steady and reliable employment. Tabor graciously assented, with the trite remark that 'the interest of the employer and the employed is always the same.' 'Number Forty-six' quietly replied that he doubted the truth of that idea, and that if true at all, it required one definition of the term 'interest' in its application to the employer, and an entirely different one in its application to the laborer. The 'interest' of the employer was to pay the *lowest* rate of wages, and the 'interest' of the laborer was to get the *highest* rate of wages. This was using the term 'interest' in the same significance as to both, and these two interests were diametrically opposed to each other and could never be reconciled: it was the 'interest' represented solely by the company's pay-roll. There was another sort of interest, applying partly to the individual stockholders and partly relating to the comparative reliability and efficiency of labor. The charter had yet, he said, twenty years to run. The company could not afford to lose two weeks out of each year, nor one week even. Certainty of operation was not only legally, but economically important to them."

"He was right there," interposed Mather.

"Of course. So too, he said, efficiency, carefulness, and good-will on the part of their employees were important in various ways—tending to certainty of service, security of property, care of material, and also to promote the popularity of the line. The hostility of their employees might, as they had seen during the strike, result in almost irreparable damage to their property. But mere lack of personal interest constantly tended to impair the value of the plant and lessen the popularity of the line. He might be mistaken, he said, but he thought if a personal interest and pride in the line they served could be awakened in their employees, it would result in increased patronage. Competition was constantly increasing; and attractiveness, regard for the comfort and convenience of their patrons, he thought, would constitute a material element of advantage to the road.

"One of the board remarked there was no use of trying to interest the employees in the company's business —all they cared for was to make as much as they could out of the company, and do as little as they could for the money. Tabor promptly backed this up by saying that if they could keep their men from stealing they would be satisfied.

"I expected to see the minister fly off the handle at this; but he didn't. To my surprise he admitted that if all restrictions were at once removed, the company would probably lose money; but he thought it largely a matter of training. Give a man a bad name, he said, and everybody knew he was apt to deserve it sooner or later. He had no doubt that suspicion on the part of the employer was one of the most fruitful causes of the dishonesty on the part of employees. There were a good many others, however, and, he had no doubt, an immediate and sweeping change of policy would be dangerous to the company. Yet he could not resist the conviction that, by wise methods, the men might come to have an actual pride in their service and a sincere regard for the company's interests. At the same time, the company might come to have a pride and interest in their employees also —a state of feeling which he thought would be advantageous to both, just as the humane and enlightened policy of the company in regard to its horses had proved profitable as well as creditable.

"This was hitting Tabor in a tender place, and he came down as gracefully as a winged duck. From that time on it was easy to see that he had a soft side for the parson's ideas. After a while Murchison, who had all along been inclined to think Tabor's gratitude a little too spontaneous, and had a sneaking notion that it was he who furnished the money to the strikers, blandly inquired:

"'If it is not impertinent, Mr. Eastman, may I ask if you know anything about the thousand dollars that was paid the strikers for not burning our property and murdering the president of this company?'

"'I know something of a sum that was given to aid the suffering families of men who had been a long time out of work.'

"'You are sure it was so applied, I suppose?' said Murchison, with a close approach to a sneer in his tone.

"'I am; for I directed that only necessaries should be purchased, and I have received the tradesman's bills for nearly every dollar of it, with the name of the family to which each parcel was delivered.'

"'I suppose you would have no objection to telling us from whom you received this money?'

"'I cannot see that it makes any difference to you,' said the minister with a look of surprise, 'or what interest you can have in that fact.'

"'Oh, of course, a man of your profession must exercise prudence.'

"'Prudence? I do not understand you, sir!'

"'Certainly—not let the left hand know what the right does, you see.'

"Murchison, who is a cad with money, shrugged his shoulders and winked at Tabor, who is a gentleman despite his money. Tabor flushed and said:

"'Mr. Eastman, you will remove some misapprehension among the members of the board if you will kindly tell us whose money it was you dispensed in this manner.'

"'Why—my own,' said the honest fellow, blushing like a schoolboy.

"I think I never heard so spontaneous a round of applause as the little company gave this declaration. Tabor trotted over and shook hands with him again, and the rest followed suit, he all the while protesting that it was not a matter worth mentioning.

"'I'm just as much obliged as any one,' said Murchison, 'but I can't quite understand why you gave a thousand dollars to save property you have no interest in.'

"'Ah, I didn't give it to save your property,' said Eastman, with a smile.

"'What did you give it for, then?'

"'I hardly know.'

"'Not mere charity, of course, for there are always people who need help just as much and probably more than these did.'

"'Very likely,' replied Eastman.

"'Then why did you give it?' asked Murchison, puffing out his cheeks like a big toad, and looking around as if he had the divine on the hip.

"'It would be hard to tell all the reasons,' answered the young man candidly. 'I certainly did not do it for the sake of the company, nor entirely for the sake of the men or their families; but I had a feeling that this money, which I had laid by for the expense of a summer trip and refitting my yacht, would not only do more good, but give me more satisfaction, if used in that way than in any other; and I think it did. It probably prevented some crime and inclined both parties to the settlement which came afterward.'

"'You expect to get it back, I suppose,' said Murchison.

"'I have no doubt the men would repay me if I should ask them, or even if they knew I had given it, but I hope to get my pay in another way,' answered Eastman with a smile.

"'You expected the company to foot the bill, eh?'

"Then the minister's face flushed and his eyes had an ominous gleam in them; but he kept his temper and replied:

"'I had no idea of receiving one penny from the company, directly or indirectly.'

"'Indeed!' said Murchison incredulously; 'then how did you expect to get your money back?'

"'I did not expect to get it back, but I thought I had never done anything in my life toward helping to solve the most difficult problem of our time—the relation between the man who works for a living and the man who hires for profit. I did not want to see it go on from bad to worse, and wait until it was solved by violence and blood. I think God has given us brains and hearts on purpose that we may apply reason and justice to such difficulties and find a cure for them. I was afraid if I did not do what I did there would be more trouble. So I gave, in the first place, to prevent farther difficulty; in the second place, in the hope that it might open the way for a better state of things. I can hardly expect you to understand, sir.'

"There was the slightest possible emphasis upon the pronoun.

"'Well, I don't, that's a fact,' replied Murchison doggedly. 'But I'm glad you did it, all the same, and as we received the benefit of your action I think the company ought to make it up to you.'

"'The company cannot pay me—not a farthing!' said Eastman emphatically. 'But,' he added after a moment's pause, 'if they choose to allow me to direct the appropriation of a thousand dollars of their money, through Mr. Temple here,' with a gesture toward the superintendent, 'they will please me very much more than the return of the money could, and I think I can promise that it will be a good investment for them.'

"This was at once agreed to.

"'Now, what will you do with it?' asked Murchison.

"'I should want to consult Mr. Temple about the details,' replied Mr. Eastman, 'but the first thing I would do would be to pay for extra clerk hire, enough to keep the men's accounts in their own names and not by numbers. A number does very well for a horse, and in prisons men are so designated, though it is doubtful if there is any legal right to deprive even a convict of his name. It is a mark of degradation, and does not incline one thus treated to be manly. I was not proud of being called "Number Forty-six," though it served my purpose well enough. It never does a man any good to lessen his self-respect.'

"'You are right, Mr. Eastman,' said Tabor enthusiastically. 'Mr. Temple spoke to me about it this morning, and I told him it must be stopped at once. That won't cost anything; you must find other use for the money.'

"'If it can be done without interfering with your convenience,' said Eastman hesitantly, 'I would be glad if you could arrange, here at the stables, a comfortable waiting-room for the men, and keep hot coffee or bouillon for them at night, and during cold weather by day also, for a year, or long enough to note the effect at least. The brewers give their men all the beer they can drink, and find it pays in the added interest they take in their work, I suppose. I don't know as you would get any positive advantage from it, but I think it would keep some of the men from going to the grog-shop to warm up. I'd like to see it tried, anyhow.'

"This was assented to. The superintendent said an old harness-room could be fitted up for the purpose at little expense. They concluded that four hundred dollars would cover the cost.

"'Now, what will you do with the rest?' asked Tabor.

"'Really, gentlemen,' said Eastman cheerfully, 'I had no idea so much could be done with so little money. I don't know—would it be too much to ask you to make the balance a sort of guaranty fund for some experiments?'

"'Of what sort?' asked Murchison, not over-pleasantly. 'We're not fond of experiments.'

"'I suppose not; and I don't believe I know enough about the business of the company to define what I would do clearly. I think the board might devise some plan if they thought well of the idea.'

"'If you will explain——' said Tabor as Eastman paused.

"'What I had thought of is, whether it would not be better to institute a scheme of rewards for good conduct, instead of penalties for bad conduct. It seems to me it might be made more effective—more profitable, I mean.'

"'That's not a bad idea,' said Murchison, quite mollified by the minister's deference.

"'Of course, it needs thought and experience to devise such a system. Then, too, if you could give some public recognition to your employees. I have wondered, gentlemen, if it would not be a good notion—good policy, I mean—to give them the proceeds of one day in each year——call it Employees' Day; just divide it among them on some fair plan—service and good behavior during the year being taken into consideration.'

"'The whole day's receipts, you mean?' asked Tabor.

"'The whole or such part as you could afford. The whole would be a little more than one-fourth of one per cent. of your gross receipts. I think—of course, it is only an opinion—that the good-will of the men would add that amount to your yearly aggregate.'

"There was a moment's silence, and then Tabor burst out in his impetuous way:

"'I say, gentlemen, let's try it! Let's give them Christmas Day!'

"'It would be a new style of Santa Claus,' said the minister laughingly, though the tears glistened in his eyes, 'but I can think of none that would bring joy to more homes, or more fully illustrate the "good-will among men" which should prevail at that season. I believe if you should do it, you would find that thousands of people would ride that day just to add a nickel to your generous Christmas gift; and the added patronage, I am sure, would make you whole during the next year; besides the good you would accomplish by a commendable example and a practical step toward the solution of the labor problem.'

"Queer as it seems, it was agreed to. The Belt and Cross-Cut will divide its receipts on Christmas Day equally between those who have been in its service a year, and proportionately to those who have been with it a less time, without regard to rank, pay, or duties.

"When it was all arranged by a unanimous vote, Eastman quite broke down, and all the rest of us, to tell the truth, had the worst kind of colds. As soon as he could pull himself together, he said, laughing and wiping a suspicious moisture from his eyes at the same time.

"'Well, gentlemen—I—I—can't thank you—but—I'll relinquish all claim on that other six hundred dollars.'

"Then one of the trustees moved a vote of thanks to him, and Tabor suggested that we all adjourn to the St. Nicholas Restaurant for lunch. Temple had stolen away in the mean time, and when we came out into the yard, there was Kennedy with the stable-hands and clerks ready to cheer the board, the Reverend Eastman, and 'Number Forty-six!'

"I don't know when I've seen as pleasant a company as we had at that lunch, nor a man that I think has done so much practical good in a month as Murvale Eastman. He means just what he says, boys, and I'll tell you what, if he's going to run the Golden Lilies on that line, I'll be—hem! blamed—if I don't join the church!"

When the laugh that greeted this vehement announcement had died away, Jones rose and said in lugubrious accents:

"Won't some fellow here please—kick—me!"

"Never mind, Jonesey," said Marsh, "we'll change works. I'll kick you for maligning one of the few good men in the city, and you shall kick me for proposing to run away with his girl!"

"I'll kick you if you do, you graceless cub!" said Mather as he returned his handkerchief to his pocket.

"You ought to, perhaps, but being in the conspiracy, I don't see how you consistently could. I've a premonition I shall have to do it for the public good. Such a man ought not to be allowed to marry. It would be a public misfortune. Besides, a man of such serious views of life wouldn't suit Miss Lilian. She isn't made for such things. She's as good as gold; but she was made to enjoy, not to suffer. Such a man would kill her, just by shutting out the sunshine!"

"See here, boy, how do you come to know so much about Miss Lilian Kishu?" asked Searle rather sharply.

"How do I know her? Why, we were kids together," replied Marsh. "She'd have been my sweetheart instead of Eastman's if Father Kishu hadn't been so rich or I so poor. You see, Eastman will be rich when his aunt dies, and at any rate is distinguished. Father Kishu wants money or distinction in a son-in-law, and unfortunately I have only good looks and the sweetest of tempers. These just suit a wife, but they're no sort of good to catch a father-in-law with."

There was a call on the speaking-tube.

"You're wanted up-stairs, Searle," said Mather, who answered it.

"Well, good-by, fellows," said Searle as he rose to go. "We've had some pleasant times here, and I hope you'll miss me sometimes."

"Miss you? What do you mean?" echoed the others.

"I shall be managing editor to-morrow."

"Of the *Breeze?*"

"It is not settled yet whether it will be the *Breeze* or the *Thunderbolt.*"

"I hope it will be the *Breeze* for all our sakes," said Mather earnestly. "The 'old man' ought to let go. He's had his hand on the tiller for a good many years; lifted the *Breeze* from practical insolvency up into the millions, and he ought to retire. It's all nonsense for a man to go on killing himself after he's got more than enough."

"That's exactly what Eastman says is the disease of our time—going on acquiring after we have more than we can use or enjoy, just as the ancients used to fill up, take an emetic, and go on eating afterward for mere gustatory gratification."

"He seems to have filled you with his ideas, anyhow," said Mather, smiling.

"But they are not *his* ideas, as you have just shown. They are yours, mine, everybody's who feels the pinch of modern civilization. The only thing that is his about the matter is the curious remedy he proposes."

"What is that?"

"He says that if the Church would stop worshiping money and let the world know that it regards the needless amassing of wealth as just as unmanly and unworthy as an over-engorgement of food, that would soon become as unpopular as gluttony is among people of refined tastes."

"That *is* an idea!"

"It will bear thinking about," said Searle.

He went out and the doors swung slowly together after him. The roar of the great engines in the basement shook the building. Across the street they could see the workmen in the composing-room of the *Thunderbolt* rolling down their sleeves and putting on their coats. The record of one day's doings was complete. The great world slept, unconscious of the events the morrow would bring—unconscious of what the day itself had brought. In a few hours the newsboy's cry of "*Breeze!*" "*Thunderbolt!*" will awaken again the restless yearning of to-day to learn of yesterday's peccadillos. Then they will find how faithfully these chroniclers of fact and fancy, storm and sunshine, have catered to their desires.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DEVIOUS WAY.

"How do you do?"

Lilian Kishu started from a reverie and looked up into the bronzed face of a plainly-dressed workman who stood in her path. Her great blue eyes opened wide, and the smile which had been upon her face as she walked in the balmy autumn sunshine across Garden Square faded out as she heard the salutation and recognized the speaker.

"Why, Murvale!" she exclaimed, "how you frightened me!"

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, "I only meant to give you a surprise."

"What is—that?" she asked, pointing to the tin pail he carried, and looking him over coolly as she spoke.

"That? That is my dinner-pail," he answered with a comical look, holding it up for her inspection. She did not seem to share his gayety.

"Do you take your dinner along when you go out for a walk?" she asked with a constrained little laugh.

"Not any more, dear. This is only a relic—a sacred relic," he answered gravely.

"A relic! Of what?"

"Of the age of wonders."

"Indeed? Has it any miraculous qualities?"

"It is a thaumaturgic marvel."

"You don't say! What are you going to do with it?"

"A relic should have a shrine—especially a relic having the power of working miracles—and I am going to place this in the shrine of the Golden Lilies—hang it over the desk in the study, you know."

"Why not suspend it above the pulpit?" she asked. There was a touch of sarcasm in her tone.

"I had thought of doing so," he answered, gazing reverently at the long, square can with its tin cup, fitting bottom upward on the cover, as he spoke. It had a number of dents, though it had evidently not been long in use.

"It would be so very decorative!" she said with a derisive laugh.

"Relics are not always ornamental," he rejoined. "I think it would do me good, and my hearers, too, perhaps."

"It would harmonize so well with the rest of the interior!"

"I do not think it would be much out of place."

"You don't? A ten-thousand-dollar window and a ten-cent dinner-pail! Only think of the combination!"

She laughed uneasily and her eyes scanned his face anxiously.

"Oh, you under-estimate its value," he answered in the bantering tone she had assumed. "That pail cost a dollar. It is a marvel of ingenuity in its way; a luxury, almost an extravagance, to the workingman. It took four trips to pay for that pail."

"Trips? What do you mean?"

"Why, don't you know? But of course you don't. Let us go over to the church, and I will tell you about it."

She hesitated. Her face was flushed and there was an uneasy look in her eyes as she regarded her companion in his unaccustomed dress.

"What does this masquerading mean, Murvale?" she asked almost tearfully.

"Come and I will tell you."

"But the study is occupied."

"Have you been there? That was very kind." He smiled fondly down upon her. "We will not disturb them. I will only leave my relic there, and we will pass through into the church. It seems an age since I have seen you."

"That is not my fault." She spoke reproachfully.

"Nor mine," he rejoined carelessly. "Come."

He dropped his dinner-pail to his side and touched her arm lightly with his left hand. She turned, half-unwillingly it seemed, and strolled back with him along the path across the park.

"Isn't it a lovely day?" he asked as they sauntered on. He drew her to the side of the walk where the wind had heaped up the yellow leaves, and kicked a path through them as he went. Everything seemed to afford him delight.

"*You* seem to enjoy it," she said, smiling at his boyish abandon.

"I do, I do, Lilian!" he exclaimed, looking at her with beaming eyes. "I believe I am the happiest man in the world to-day."

"Yes?" she said doubtfully. "Why——" She looked up at him timidly, but at once turned away her eyes and did not finish the inquiry. She did not know that he had just come from his interview with the managers of the Belt and Cross-Cut Company, and that the joy of the successful worker for others' welfare was thrilling his heart.

"What makes me so happy just now, you mean? O, everything; the day, the sunshine, you—everything! I feel like a boy out for a holiday."

"You act like one."

There was a hint of disapproval in her tone, but he did not notice it.

"I suppose so. You will not wonder when you know the reason. I have ever so much to explain, and was just on my way to see you."

"You were?" she asked, glancing at his clothes.

"Well, I was hurrying to the study to change these. I should have had my uniform on by this time if I had not met you—black coat, white tie, everything quite unexceptionable, I assure you."

He laughed contentedly.

"I should hope it would be a little more conventional than—what you have on."

"These are all right," he answered carelessly. "Four-fifths of the men in the city do not wear any better."

"But they—it suits their station."

"Well, it suits their occupation; I don't know about the station. They are workers, and it would seem as if those who make luxury possible had about as good a right as anybody to enjoy it. But I have been very happy wearing these clothes. If I could only have come and told you about it! You have no idea how hard it was to stay away."

"You seem to have endured the privation."

She was looking down at the leaves upon the walk before her, stirring them with the tip of her parasol.

"I knew it was unavoidable; besides, I saw you almost every day."

"Saw me?"

"After your return to the city, I mean."

"But—I don't understand——"

"On the street, you know. At first I was afraid you would recognize me. Afterward I enjoyed watching your happiness, knowing myself unrecognized. Haven't you sometimes thought it would be pleasant to observe the happiness of those you love, yourself unseen? It was like an invisible companionship. Sometimes I used to think you must feel my presence."

"Why, I have hardly been out at all. Papa had to return to the city, and I came to keep him company; but it was so ridiculously early in the season that I hardly showed myself abroad."

"I knew that was why you rode so much on the street-car."

"On the street-car?" She started and glanced quickly toward him.

"I thought it very brave of you to sacrifice so much."

"Sacrifice? I don't—understand you."

Her face was like flame, and she looked steadily away from her companion.

"To return with your father, I mean."

"Oh—of course. But where were you?"

"Let us hurry on. You shall play my favorite anthem on the organ, and then I will tell you a story."

"Can't you tell it here—on one of the benches?"

"I am afraid we should attract too much attention."

His eyes rested an instant on her charming suit in which the early autumn tints were so deftly blended, and then with a smile he glanced down at his own garments.

"The combination *is* unusual," she said with a laugh. "That is why people stare at us so, I suppose."

"Do they? I hadn't noticed," he said carelessly. "No matter, we shall have the church all to ourselves."

"But it is so gloomy. I always think of spooks when I look into an empty church."

"Have you ever seen the sunshine through the oriel, lighting up the Christ?"

"No."

He noted her indifference.

"I understand," he said.

She looked up inquiringly.

"That you should think the church gloomy, I mean. It is a pity it is ever closed. I love to sit in the dim light and watch the golden disk creep upward to the hallowed head. To me it is always a sanctuary, a place of refuge, full of sweet thoughts. I have so often dreamed of having you with me there that I forgot you might not enjoy it as I do."

There was a trace of disappointment in his tone, but no reproach. She looked searchingly at him, but made no reply. His head was bent down watching the little billow of leaves which rose before his footsteps, but the boyish glee which had been in his face had departed. Suddenly he stopped. They were just opposite the great cluster of nyassa.

"Why, what am I thinking of?" he exclaimed. "Here is just the place."

He pushed aside the branches which met above the neglected walk and signed for her to enter.

"Oh, no, not there!" she exclaimed with a start.

"Why not? It is a very pretty spot, and entirely secluded."

"Yes—of course," she stammered, "but I—I would rather go to the church." She looked up appealingly.

"As you prefer, certainly," he said in a disappointed tone, letting go the branches, "but I assure you——"

"Isn't that where—where the man was taken sick?" she interrupted hurriedly.

"Mr. Underwood? Yes. Did his wife tell you?"

"I haven't seen her."

"I thought you said you had been at the church."

"I didn't go in."

"That's a pity; it would have done them good, I am sure."

"I—I don't like sick people," petulantly.

"Of course not, but they are entitled to sympathy," he answered gravely.

"Oh, I am sorry for the sick, and for the unfortunate, too," she added apologetically.

"I am sure you are."

"But I don't like to see them, to be near them, to have anything to do with them."

"I suppose some are so constituted," he replied. "Fortunately, the sick are not the only ones who need to be cheered, and one who makes so many happy need not reproach herself for shrinking from the sight of suffering."

"But I—whom do I make happy?" she asked in surprise.

"Every one who sees you," he answered warmly. "Beauty is a priceless gift; it blesses all beholders."

"You do not think it wicked to love pretty things, then?"

"Assuredly not," he answered with a mischievous glance. "I should be a great sinner if it were."

"Ah, I didn't mean that," she said with a conscious blush; "to desire to be pretty, I mean."

"Do you not suppose the butterfly enjoys his beauty as well as the bee her sweets? And does it not bring us as much happiness?"

"But if a woman should be—should like to be admired?"

"It is her duty to be attractive," replied the lover earnestly. "God gave woman beauty to lighten the world. With it she is able to exorcise evil and strengthen the impulse for good. Man does not need it. He is the doer, the achiever. Woman is the inspirer, the consoler. Her beauty is the complement of his strength. A woman should rejoice in her beauty just as a man exults in his strength. It is her kingdom. Man seldom possesses it, and when he does it rarely inures to his own or the world's advantage."

They were still standing before the opening in the hedge through which the seat under the nyassa could be dimly seen. Lilian had often sat there with her old playmate Marsh, and his handsome face rose before her as Murvale Eastman uttered these words.

"Let us go," she said with sudden irritation of manner.

They moved quickly on, through the gate and toward the study, Eastman wondering what he had said to give her annoyance.

The reporters had gone. There had been two or three loitering about the church when Lilian walked by an hour before, Marsh among them. She had intended to call at the study, not from sympathy, but out of curiosity. Seeing Marsh, she turned into the park, and more from habit than deliberate purpose, had gone and sat down in their old haunt. He had followed her, and his rollicking humor had driven away the gloom which oppressed her. She had thought herself very unhappy; but the gay young fellow soon made her smile. Everybody knew of her engagement to the young minister, but Marsh ignored it, and gave her an amusing account of his disappearance, making a thousand ridiculous surmises about the missing pastor of the Golden Lilies, but taking care to say nothing that might offend. She had just left Marsh and sauntered down to the entrance on the avenue when she met Murvale Eastman. The contrast between the handsome young reporter and the sturdy, matter-of-fact minister clad in his workingman's suit had appealed to her unpleasantly. She did not love Marsh, though she had liked him almost ever since she could remember, and she did love Murvale Eastman—so she said. She was certainly very proud of the fact that he loved her. She wished he would not take so much for granted, however; that he would not forget that a woman loves always to be wooed, even after she has been won. In short, she could not help wishing that he was more like her old playmate and less like himself. Somehow, she could not understand him—or perhaps he did not understand her.

"Can we not get into the church without going through the study?" she asked as they approached the entrance.

"There is the door to the organ loft," he answered hesitantly.

"Let us go that way."

"The key is in the study."

"I will wait for you here."

She sat down on one of the stone benches in the atrium while he opened the door with his latch-key. When he returned she was tracing figures on the stone floor with her parasol and did not hear his approach until he said:

"A penny for your thoughts!"

She started and looked up at him. What a splendid specimen of manhood he was, so strong and resolute! She could not help comparing him with Marsh. She had been thinking of the two all the time he was away. He had changed his attire, and held a small key in his hand.

"Don't you think we'd better go through the study?"

A shadow fell upon her face.

"As you wish," he said lightly. "You will find the other a crooked way, and I fear a dusty one. Nobody uses it but the organist, and he but seldom."

She looked up as if to make some reply, then turned and started down the steps, raising her parasol as she did so, though the sun was not shining in the alley. Arriving at the door, he opened it, she stepped within, and he followed.

"Shall I leave the door open?" he asked.

"No."

Her voice sounded strangely hoarse in the narrow passage. He shut the door and groped about for the stairs.

"Dark as the pyramids, isn't it?" he said. "Give me your hand, Lilian, and let me strike a match. Where are you?"

"Here."

Close beside him came the answer. The word was spoken in a whisper. He almost felt her breath. At the same instant his arm encircled her. He had not thought she was so near. He felt with his left hand along the wall, still holding her with his right.

"Here are the stairs. Come on, dear."

There was no need for him to whisper, but he somehow did not think of speaking above his breath.

"Be careful," he said anxiously. The stairs were narrow and they walked side by side, his arm around her still. Yet he was afraid! She was so slight, so precious! How terribly dark it was! Why had he let her come that way? Yet he was glad that she had insisted on doing so.

It showed her confidence in him. It was so sweet to be alone with her, so utterly alone! He almost lifted her up the winding stairs, testing each step before he trusted it. How silly he was! He had never clasped her in his arms before; he would not have done it then but for the narrow stairway and the darkness.

They emerged at length into a narrow space behind the great organ. A little round window like that in a ship's side let in the sunshine above them. A heavy curtain shut the recess off from the body of the church. They stopped and listened. There was no sound save their own breathing. He released her as they reached the top of the stairs, and she entered before him. She stepped across to the curtain, drew it aside a little, and peeped down into the silent church, then turned and glanced up at him. His face was flushed.

"I am afraid, Murvale," she whispered. "Let us go back."

She crept toward him, trembling and pale, as if to regain the stairs. He reached out his arm and drew her to him. She turned away her face and struggled, half-protestingly.

"Murvale! Murvale! Let us go back!"

She still spoke in a whisper. He drew her closer. Her hat fell back. He kissed the wavy tresses as her head lay on his breast.

"Lilian! My own, my very own!" he whispered. She turned her face upward and offered him her lips. He kissed them again and again. Her hat dropped down upon the floor and her hair fell like a wave of burnished gold about her shoulders. He put her off at arm's-length and gazed at her, intoxicated with her beauty. Her eyes fell and her bosom heaved with quick breaths.

He lifted her upon the one stool that stood in the narrow passage, and suddenly knelt down before her, bowing his head upon his clasped hands, which rested on her lap. She looked down at him wonderingly. He held one of her hands clasped in his. She put up the other and threw back a wave of hair that had fallen on her bosom. Still he did not move. She drew back a little way and sought to release her hand. It was as if held in a vise. When he looked up his face was aglow with a calm, quiet light and his lashes were wet with tears.

"Lilian, my own Lilian," he said as he rose and kissed her forehead. She shrank from him shudderingly.

"Why did you bring me here?" she asked.

"I, Lilian? It was your own suggestion."

He spoke in his ordinary tone. She started as she heard it echo through the empty church.

"Hush!" she breathed, holding up her hand.

"Why should we speak in whispers, Lilian?" he asked; nevertheless he moderated his tone.

"I wish you wouldn't call me Lilian," she said pettishly. "I'm not a child."

"But you are my—my——" stammered the poor fellow in amazement.

"No, I'm not your—your *anything!*"

She sprang off the stool and began to coil her hair. He picked up her hat and brushed the dust off the ribbons, gazing at it admiringly.

"Do you know this is a very pretty hat, Lilian?"

"Lilian again!" she exclaimed with a little angry stamp. "I wish you wouldn't. You've no right to call me that."

"But you are going to be my wife, dear."

"Well, we're not married yet; perhaps we never shall be."

"What do you mean?"

"No matter; let me go!"

She tried to pass him and go down the stairs. He put his arm about her, but she twisted away from him.

"Let me go!" she repeated angrily.

"I cannot understand you, dear," he said wonderingly, "but you must know that you cannot return that way. It would never do. I was wrong, perhaps, to let you come by it. But we can never go back where we were a little while ago. We have crossed the bridge which separates two souls, and cannot repass it. I have kissed you, and you have received my kisses. Henceforth we belong to each other and I must protect you from the shadow of reproach."

He would have taken her in his arms again, but she pushed him away, and stood sobbing and trembling before him.

"Let me go!" she said beseechingly. "Oh, why did I come?"

"You can go, certainly, if you wish," he said coolly, "but you cannot go the way we came. For your sake and mine, we must return through the study."

She made no answer, but her eyes fell before his earnest yet respectful gaze. What a strange man he was! Would he always be better than she? Yet she almost hated him for his thoughtfulness.

"We will open the organ," he continued. "I will work the bellows, and when you have played as much as you like we will go. Come."

He held out his hand. She placed hers in it, her eyes still downcast. He drew aside the curtain and they stepped out into the little gallery where the singers sat. The sun flamed through the oriel window in the western gable and lit up the head of the Christ in the famous window. Murvale Eastman removed his hat with a look of profound reverence. Lilian Kishu, after one swift glance, bowed her head and pressed her hands tightly over her eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GLOW OF A FATEFUL GEM.

THE disk of sunshine lighted up the circlet of golden lilies that hung above the thorn-crowned head, when Murvale Eastman left the bellows and came to tell his betrothed the story of his month's experience as a workingman. She turned away, half-regretfully as it seemed, from the key-board of the great organ whose reeds were still quivering with the dying notes of the exultant anthem her touch had evoked, and seated herself in one of the spacious chairs of the little gallery, to listen to the promised revelation. In the softened light her delicate features and lithe form stood out like a cameo of matchless grace against the richly-upholstered chair on which she half-reclined. He was silent for a moment, overwhelmed with her loveliness. It was not her beauty—at least he did not think of that—but the gracious abandon of her pose, that paralyzed his tongue and choked back the words that struggled to his lips. His heart was full of a delicious gratitude. She was his, his life, his queen, and she accorded him an audience in the solemn silence of the sanctuary with only the pictured Christ looking down upon them!

She glanced up under the brim of the broad hat, the shadow of which set off with rare effect the gray-blue eyes with their long lashes and ever-appealing expression of childish innocence, and seeing the rapt look upon his face, dropped her lids, and began to trace the figures of the carpet with the tip of her parasol. She did not change her position. Why should she? In a year's practice she could not have found one whose unstudied grace so well displayed her peculiar charm. She was hardly beautiful; at least not many women thought her so. Neither form nor feature were of notable perfection; yet both were good, and the harmony between them was complete. The slender figure, somewhat below the medium height, matched exquisitely the delicate face, the soft golden hair, and the tender, childish complexion. Only one feature seemed out of harmony with this *ensemble*, the great round eyes with their dark fringes, and the clearly-marked eyebrows, always arched as if in constant wonder at what met her gaze. Men admired her openly, and women were never jealous of her charms, for united with them she had a trustful graciousness of manner that disarmed suspicion and held even love at bay. Murvale Eastman's glance followed her downcast eyes, and he watched in silence while she continued to trace the figures on the carpet.

"Well?" she said at length without looking up. There was a hint of amusement in her voice, and the dimple in her cheek grew unconsciously a trifle more distinct. She evidently knew and was pleased with the effect produced upon her simple-hearted lover.

He told his story without any of the animation he had imagined he would throw into its recital. Poor fellow! He had often rehearsed his part, and dreamed of the sympathy that would light her eyes, of the tenderness that would creep into her voice, as she listened to his tale of manly duty manfully performed. He loved this fair girl so simply that he had never thought it possible that her nature might not respond to his aspirations. He had been charmed with her at the very first, and in his loving fancy had clothed her with all worthy attributes. He did not liken her to his ideal—he was not conscious that he had any. He had never been a "ladies' man." He was not exactly timid in their presence, but said to himself that he did not understand them. He had never had a sister, and could hardly remember his mother. A maiden aunt had been his guardian, and had done her duty by keeping him at school. She was rich. Her home had been his home; but she seldom occupied it, especially during his vacations. He had grown up, therefore, with somewhat peculiar ideas of womankind. He was emphatically a man's man. He liked the society and the sports of men, and they liked him. He understood men and knew how to weigh and measure, how to please and how to conquer them. While he enjoyed their approval, their disapprobation had no special terror for him.

As for women, while he did not understand, he worshiped them. He never doubted that they were much better than men. All the noblest features of humanity were feminine to him. Love, wifehood, motherhood—these were sacred realms, over which woman reigned supreme. Society, the world of fashion even, seemed to him not something base and false and vile, but a beam of sunshine in which pure and beautiful butterflies artlessly disported themselves when relieved from the sacred and tender duties imposed upon them as priestesses in the temple of life.

When he came to love Lilian Kishu, therefore, he placed her on the very pinnacle of imaginable perfection.

He never thought it possible that she could be smutched with so much as an evil thought. He did not deliberately believe her incapable of doing wrong, but simply never thought of evil in connection with her. His faith was instinctive, and so beyond the realm of doubt. They had been betrothed nearly a year, but he had never embraced her, never felt himself alone with her before. And that embrace—the kisses—how they thrilled his being! How good she was to grant him such rapturous privilege! No wonder she was afraid of him! He had been a boor—a bear! And she? She was a saint—a lamb!

Thus the simple-hearted fellow reasoned with himself as he worked the bellows, while the fair girl's fingers swept over the keys, and the great hollow vault echoed and re-echoed the strains of praise which the ear of genius had caught out of the depths of space which to other souls are cold and dull as the void of eternity. Jonas Underwood had had his couch moved so that through the open door behind the pulpit he might look up at the figure of the Christ he loved with such strange, harsh fervor. He lay holding his wife's hand while they watched the transformation, and the tears sprang to both their eyes as the volume of sweet sound came echoing through the spacious church already full of tender symphonies. All unwittingly the puzzled lover and puzzling maid were ministering to bruised souls who sat in shadow waiting for the end.

Murvale Eastman had never dreamed that it would seem a thankless task to tell the woman he loved what he had done, what he hoped to do, and what he wished might be done. To him the betterment of human conditions had become the very highest form of praise. The act of worship was to him only the human soul's passionate indorsement of the beneficent purpose of the Divine. He worshiped God because he believed in God's love to man. He did not once dream that the same ecstatic recognition of this central truth of Christianity might not animate the heart of his betrothed. He was sure that her nature was one of exquisite sensibility. He had seen her lips quiver and her eyes grow soft with brimming tears as he told the story of the Christ and His divine mission. To him the Master was the incarnation of a purpose so holy, so intense and fervent, that shame and sorrow, humiliation and death could not quench it. How should he know that while he was extolling the strength and grandeur of the god-like nature, the great tender eyes in whose cerulean depths he was wont to see reflected all the holy light of heaven, were dewy only with pity for the suffering which the Holy One endured? How should he know that the glow which lighted up her face and so enhanced its spiritual beauty that he sometimes feared his heart worshiped her even before his Master, was only the reflection of his own enthusïasm? He did *not* know these things, and because he did not, he looked to find himself rewarded a thousand fold for the efforts he had made to better existing conditions, in her smiling, wondering, tearful appreciation.

But she did not smile, she did not tremble when at length the time came. No eager love-light came dancing into her eyes as he told the story of his sojourn in the desert of toil. She sat still, quietly tracing the pattern of the carpet, breathing evenly, and only now and then looking up at him inquiringly.

Yet how lovely she was! The soft hair, the dreamy eyes, the graceful lines of the half-reclining figure, the careless movement! He was not angry at her lack of responsiveness. It was not much to her, this month of strange experience to him. She no doubt regarded it as a matter of course, one of the things a man ought to do, especially a minister. He wondered if he ought not to have done more—so much that she would have been compelled to smile approvingly, at least. What had he done, after all? What an egotist, to think that one so good would be stirred by the bungling story of his awkward effort to solve even the simplest postulate of the great problem of human life!

She looked up at last with eyes full enough of wonder—wonder and something else, he could not determine what it was. But she did not unbend, her cheek did not flush, her lips gave no word of approval. Her eyes seemed to grow larger, their blue depths to become gray. Her cheek was cold, and the hair that formed so soft a crown for her brow seemed to lose something of its golden luster. Of what was she thinking? Had he failed in the telling as miserably as in the doing of his self-appointed task?

When he had concluded he held out his hand, saying, "Now you know it all, dear Lilian—why I could not come to you, how I saw you so often, and why I have said and done the things at which you wondered. Will you not tell me—have I done right?"

She did not take his hand, but drew away a little and answered in a strange, constrained manner:

"I suppose so," adding as she saw the look of wonder deepening in his eyes, "You are very good, you *must* be very good, much better than—than I could ever be." She was toying with a ring upon her finger as she spoke. "I cannot understand how you should enjoy such things."

"I don't suppose I do *enjoy* them," he said; "at least I never thought of them as a source of enjoyment. Probably one does enjoy doing what he thinks ought to be done, though, just as a brave man enjoys difficulty and danger."

"You like to be thought brave?"

"I suppose so," smiling; "at least I should hate to be esteemed a coward. I think any man would."

"Are all men brave?" She was thinking of Marsh.

"Well—yes, I suppose so; in some sense."

"But all do not seek to do such—such unaccountable things?" She was sure Marsh would not.

"Perhaps not," laughingly; "not just the same; but they may do things requiring a good deal more courage."

"As what?"

"Well, a great wrong, for instance. Every wicked man must be very brave."

Why did he think of the man who had been buried from the Church of the Golden Lilies more than a month before, and of the black-veiled figure he had met in the study only yesterday?

Lilian shrank still farther away at his words.

"Did any one ever tell you that you were brave—very brave, I mean—unusually brave?" she added after a moment's pause.

"I don't know. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I suppose no one ever said to you, 'You are a brave man!'"

"Yes, I was told so—once; I believe twice, now that I think of it."

"By the same person?"

"Curiously enough, yes."

"Did it give you pleasure?"

"I hardly think so; certainly not the first time."

"It was a person whose good opinion you prized?"

"Very highly."

"And one capable of judging?"

"One of the bravest women that ever lived," he spoke with enthusiasm, adding more temperately, "and one of the best."

There was a moment's hesitation, and a hint of tremor in her voice as she asked:

"Who was it, Murvale?"

He did not note the tone nor the strained look in her eyes. The shadows were gathering in the church.

"It was a good while ago—the first time, that is"—he answered with something like a sigh. "It was Mrs.—that is—perhaps I ought not to tell you just now. You will probably know all about it to-morrow." His manner was hesitant, but without confusion.

"Ah, so soon?" she rejoined lightly, starting upright in the chair. "Then I'll wait. Shall I learn everything about her, do you think?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

There was no mistaking the disgust in his voice.

"How delightful! I must be going now."

Her tone was one of contented cheerfulness. Murvale Eastman did not love the lady in black whom she had overheard conversing with him in the study. This was enough. She was not always sure that she loved the man to whom she was engaged, but she was positive that she did not want him to love another. If he were only not so good, or rather not so fond of doing good—a little more like Marsh—she would be entirely happy.

She rose, letting her gloves fall from her lap. He stooped and picked them up. She took them with her right hand, changing them at once to the left, which held her parasol, and whispered her thanks, looking up into his eyes, her right hand raised expectantly. Another man would have kissed her, seeing that look and being so near. If he had done so she would have thrown her arm about his neck and told him how jealous she had been of the tall, handsome woman with whom he seemed to be on such familiar terms; that she was ashamed to have doubted him, and proud of his unconscious faithfulness.

But Murvale Eastman saw none of this. The upraised hand and expectant eyes gave him no hint. He merely turned and led the way down the steps to the platform. She followed moodily. She could not help thinking that her old playmate would never have slighted her pretty overture. Yet he had never kissed her since they were little children at dancing-school together. What a gallant little lover he was then! She cared nothing for him now, she thought, and she tried so hard to love her betrothed, but he was so—so blind! Yet how he loved her, so fervently, so purely! She was very proud of him, very proud of his love, only she wished it were—well, a little different, somehow.

The door into the study was closed. As they reached the foot of the stairs, he said hesitantly: "You will speak to—to—the good people in there?"

"If you wish."

"Thank you."

He knocked at the door, and when they were admitted introduced his companion. The sick man was resting quietly, but the look upon his face was of that pathetic sort which indicates the hope of delay rather than recovery. He took the young girl's hand and looked with tender meaning from her face to that of his friend.

"She is to be my wife," Murvale Eastman responded to the unspoken question. His tone was very tender. Lilian's face flushed scarlet.

"How like a man," said Mrs. Underwood, noting the girl's embarrassment and wishing to relieve it. "You must teach him better manners, miss." Yet the look she cast on the offender was one of open admiration. There is nothing a woman so much admires in a lover as the frank avowal of his love for another.

"You are a very fortunate woman," whispered Jonas Underwood, still holding her hand and turning an earnest look upon the young man as he stepped a little aside talking in a low tone to the wife about her husband's condition. Lilian lifted her eyes from the invalid's face and let them rest upon her lover. Why could he not have been as picturesque-looking as this man with his long beard and magnificent dark eyes! She knew Murvale Eastman was strong and supple, a man whose physique was envied by other men, but there was nothing striking in his appearance. If he only had this man's eyes it would be so much easier, she thought, to love him—as he deserved.

As this thought passed through her mind the sick man's eyes fell upon an opal that shone upon one of the fingers of the hand he held. His face showed an almost childish pleasure as he watched its fitful iridescence, turning the white hand back and forth that he might catch the gleam of fire which the gas-jet shining above the head of his couch awoke in the mysterious stone. Lilian watched him wonderingly. She did not like sick people, but this man with his flowing beard, dark eyes, wide brow, and tender, pathetic look, attracted her greatly. She liked to have him hold her hand. She wished she might do something to give him pleasure.

"The only gem I ever fancied," he whispered with a smile, "was an opal."

"I hate them!" she answered pettishly.

The statement was hardly true. She had been greatly pleased when this came into her possession, but she did not wish him to think she cared for it.

"It is said opals always bring my family good luck."

"This has never brought me any."

"But you do not know what it may have in store for you. You have not done with it yet."

"Yes, I have," she responded gayly; "I am going to give it to you."

She glanced toward Murvale Eastman as she spoke, but did not raise her eyes to his face. Why had she uttered those words? She had hardly worn the gem an hour when he declared his love. It was on her birthday, almost a year before. She was very proud then, both of her new ring and her new lover. Would he remember it? She looked up at his face. He was smiling approval, evidently unconscious of the significance of her words, and only glad that she was entertaining the man he had befriended. She was angry because he would not remonstrate.

She slipped the ring off her finger and dropped it into Jonas Underwood's open palm. He received it with a look of gratified surprise.

"Thank you, my dear," he said with a quick upward glance. "You know an opal resents being bought and sold, and is a gift that must never be consciously requited, or made in acknowledgment of known favor. You have met the conditions; and this has brought you good fortune in spite of yourself. I have already paid you even more than its value."

"You have?"

"Wait! wait!" he said meaningly.

"You must not talk so much, dear," said Mrs. Underwood, hastening to the side of the couch, anxious to spare the invalid. "He means," she added, looking up at the girl and then glancing around at her companion, "that he has made your husband that is to be——" she paused in evident confusion.

"Richer than he ever dreamed of being," interposed the minister, instinctively recognizing her embarrassment and naturally misconstruing it. "I should never have owned that dinner-pail but for him, Lilian. I have told her all about it," he added with a smile to the invalid.

"But I meant——" began Mrs. Underwood. A look from her husband checked the explanation.

Murvale Eastman and Lilian Kishu soon bade the occupants of the study good-night and sauntered toward her father's house in the early autumn twilight. Not much was said upon the way; his heart was too full—and hers? They climbed the marble steps and entered the vestibule. It was spacious and dimly-lighted. Though deemed a marvel of architectural elegance a score of years before, the house was already growing old-fashioned.

"Shall I ring?" he asks.

She shakes her head, searches in her pocket for a latch-key, and inserting it in its place, says:

"Will you come in?"

It is not an invitation, only a courtesy. He feels it to be such.

"I think you have given me enough of your time today."

There is a grateful tenderness in his tone. She takes the hand he extends.

"Good-night."

She looks up into his eyes. "Murvale, I am not good enough to—to be your wife," she whispers. She lifts his hand to her lips; kisses it once, twice, thrice, with fierce, passionate ardor; opens the door, and with a little laugh disappears within.

The pastor of the Golden Lilies stood without, speechless with rapture. He walked on air, his head knocking against the stars, as he made his way homeward. Nevertheless he did ample justice to the belated meal that awaited him, notwithstanding the landlady's frowns. He was a healthy man, though a purblind lover. Some hours afterward he fell asleep and slept until the dawn, without once dreaming that the night was but a narrow isthmus stretched between a blissful past and an ocean of inky blackness that lay beyond.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE THUNDERBOLT "SCOOPS" THE BREEZE.

THERE was no room to doubt that the *Thunderbolt* had made a hit. It was a very attractive scandal, and the edition went off like hot cakes. Every man one met upon the streets had a copy in his hand, or in his pocket. The presses were worked at top speed to meet the extra demand. The article purported to be based on information supplied by a reporter of the *Breeze*, but not a hint of the scandal was to be found in the columns of that journal. The *Thunderbolt* had evidently "scooped" its rival, and reaped the reward of enterprise. That was the verdict of the public. No lady was willing to be seen with the paper in her possession, but an unusually large number of servant girls displayed great anxiety to secure the latest news. The newsboys understood the situation and winked at the housemaids, but never offered the *Thunderbolt* to a lady. Yet, somehow, the mistresses seemed to have divined what the paper contained. So, all over the city, the Church of the Golden Lilies, its pastor, Wilton Kishu, his daughter Lilian, and the mysterious woman in black, were curiously intermingled in the gossip of the day; while the wires that led to other cities were hot with the racy revelations which were already being set up with many an irreverent jest in hundreds of composing rooms throughout the land.

It is the fashion of the time. Innocence is no longer deemed a desirable quality; and there are many good people who declare that familiarity with vice is not detrimental to manly worth or womanly purity. It is only romantic notions of love and virtue that we fear to-day; and these we seek to forestall by prescribing for the young soul the carefully elaborated daily record of the world's infamies, and substituting "realistic" impurity as a motive for "healthy fiction," instead of the silly sentimentalism of old-fashioned love. No matter; a generation to whose lips the pessimistic foulness of Tolstoi and his imitators has been commended as an inspiring cordial, not only by the high-priests of literature, but by ministers of God, is perhaps beyond fear of peril from the highly-spiced narratives of social peccadillos which abound in the daily press. News is the most important element of knowledge; and naughtiness the most important feature of news. Such is the verdict of to-day.

So the hum of scandal filled the city, and the leer of shameful consciousness gave a zest to the general discourse.

Even the blush on the cheek of innocence told how thoroughly the city was enjoying the feast of foulness the editor of the *Thunderbolt* had spread for their delectation. It was the biggest kind of a hit. Twenty thousand more of the papers sold than of any edition of the *Thunderbolt* ever printed before. All the men commended the journal for its boldness and enterprise. But thank God, no man opened his lips to any woman in such vein! It may not be much to be grateful for, but even the most insignificant blessing should not be overlooked. And there were some, too—how rare they seemed to the hopeful observer! —who with saddened eyes and anxious tones, sometimes feaful and sometimes resentful, asked: "Do you suppose this dreadful story *can* be true?" And there were fewer still—ah, so very few!—who drew down their brows angrily, and pinning their faith to poor self-slandered humanity, resolutely said, "It is a lie!" Blessed be the remnant who can still believe God's noblest work not wholly foul!

Yet many of the good people who deem the depiction of vice the chief means of promoting virtue, praised the *Thunderbolt* for the innuendoes it flung at the pastor of the Golden Lilies, and at the woman who had presumed to become a householder in the city, and assume the guise of gentility, without furnishing evidence of abundant means or, at least, influential connections. If she had been known to be worth a million dollars, society would have asked no questions about her past, and the editor would as soon have bitten off his own head as have given currency to such aspersions.

When he went down to his breakfast that morning, Murvale Eastman found himself the center of a curious circle who strove in vain to conceal the conscious glances that sought his face while he read the account of his own "shameless conduct" as it was "exposed" in the newspaper which lay beside his plate. Most unexpectedly to the observers, it did not seem to affect him seriously. Sometimes his face became grave, but more frequently it was smiling and mirthful. With most reprehensible disregard for the feelings of others, he said nothing about the matter he must have known was uppermost in the minds of his fellow-lodgers, but ate as hearty a breakfast as if he had not been struck by the *Thunderbolt*. The watchers were disappointed, dissatisfied. It was shameful, they said, such callous indifference. Even if innocent, he would naturally have been pained at such a public scandal, for the sake of his church, if not for himself. So his very lack of guilty confusion was taken as a proof of guilt; and the cheerful appetite with which he discussed his breakfast was held by the gossips of the house to be proof positive of a hardened conscience.

Of half this feeling, Murvale Eastman was unconscious, and of the rest, indifferent. The matter, so far as he was personally concerned, seemed to him rather amusing than serious. The whole thing was so plain—his relation to it so absolutely blameless—that he could not imagine anything more than a candid statement of the facts necessary, not merely to free him from suspicion of evil, but to establish the fair fame of the lady whose name had been so recklessly associated with his. He would have pitied the *Thunderbolt* for its absurd mistake, had not all his pity been given to his innocent partner in imputed evil. He could not but think of the tears she would shed. Poor woman! She had known a good deal of sorrow, but until this time had always found sympathizing friends. Now she was alone, alone in the great city except for him and her lawyer. But Metziger was a host in himself; he would be sure to turn this brutal attack to her advantage. Still, that would only be to transfer the load of shame to other hearts. What he half-hoped might not be generally known would now be made public. Others would be made to bear the burden of sin and shame the scandalmonger had sought to cast on this defenseless woman's head.

Would people guess the truth? There it was, as it seemed to him, told as plain as words could tell it. She had been known at the Glenmore as Mrs Sandford; *now* she had assumed the name of Merton; "probably," the witty reporter stated, "from motives of economy, the name of J. Sandford Merton being yet upon the door-plate." There was a romance, a tragedy, a terrible story of real life in those words, but the astute journalist did not see it. Would others be as blind—the family—the world? And if they were not, what would be said of the dead—of the church—of the religion he professed?

The young minister's face became grave enough as he thought of these things, and there were tears in his eyes, which the landlady noted, as he finished his coffee. A card was handed to him at that moment—Percy W. Searle was the name it bore. He heard the bells of the Golden Lilies ring out nine o'clock as he went up the stairs to meet the representative of the *Breeze*. Dear church! He always noted its chimes! His heart ached to think that any taint of shame might stain the sweetness of its renown! Nine o'clock; his engagement with Mrs. Merton is at ten. He must not forget that. She has need of all her friends now; and he is just half of all she has in the city. He must not fail to keep his appointment, nor be a moment late, lest it cause her one more pang. He cannot give Mr. Searle much time; fortunately, it is not necessary. So he says to himself as he ascends the stairs, and there is a pleasant smile upon his face as he extends his hand to the reporter who waits his coming in the hall.

"You can give me a minute?" asks Searle, testing the genial face before him with those calm gray eyes which are trained to read the hearts of men, while his countenance gives no hint of the verdict heart and brain are making up.

"About forty of them," is the hearty reply, which is easily heard in the adjacent parlor.

"Is that all?" with a smile. "Well, I guess the *Breeze* can get along with that. I presume your time will be pretty well taken up to-day."

They are walking along the narrow hall toward the stairway in the rear. Searle is conscious that more than one face is peering at them through the parlor door, and cannot resist a smile at the discomfiture he thinks they are sure to meet. But the minister's answering words overwhelm even his impregnable equipoise, and stun him into silence with astonishment.

"Oh, I don't know," responds the minister gayly. He is just rounding the turn in the stairs at the landing, halfway up the long first flight. He has one hand in the pocket of a black velvet smoking-jacket faced with crimson silk, and caught across the breast with crimson cords which confine it to his supple form; the other holds the *Thunderbolt*, half unfolded. His face is toward the front hall door. The morning sun shines through a window at his left and falls upon it. His voice is audible over all the house.

"I do not know that I have anything especially important to-day, except an engagement at ten—*with Mrs. Merton!*"

The words were clear, distinct, emphatic. Searle could not help a start and a glance toward the parlor door. Perhaps it was only fancy, the whispered buzz of exclamation which came back to his ears along the hall:

"Did you hear that? Mrs. Merton! Shameless!"

Searle looked up at the quiet, sun-lit face before him, and a smile of reassurance came to his lips.

"You are going to see Mrs. Merton, eh?" said Searle carelessly, as he dropped into the chair the other pushed toward him when they had entered the minister's cosey sitting-room.

"Yes, indeed; I have an appointment with her for this morning, which it would never do to delay—now that she is in trouble especially."

"You know her, then?"

"Oh, very well, indeed."

"And have met her—frequently, I suppose?"

"Years ago, yes; but I had not seen her for a long time until last Sunday."

"She was at church?"

"Yes; and came into my study after the service—she and her daughter, who was only a baby when I saw her last."

"Do you remember who was present at that time? There were others there, I suppose?"

"There had been—I think she came in alone."

"It was there you made the engagement for to-day?"

"Of course."

"You must have been overheard by some one, as that fact is alluded to—or at least hinted at—in the *Thunderbolt*."

"It seems so. I had not thought of it before."

Now that he did think of it, he remembered that Lilian had more than once alluded to it in their conversation the day before.

"Have you any idea who it was?"

Murvale Eastman did not answer. Searle's countenance gave no hint that he noticed his silence.

"Who is she—this woman—Mrs. Merton, I mean?" he continued.

"Did you not see? Do *you* not understand? It is told so plainly I thought every one must see it."

He took the paper, which he had thrown upon the pile of letters that lay on the desk by which he sat, and handed it to the other, crushing it together so that his thumb pointed to the allusion made to the door-plate. The journalist read it with that practiced ease which enables one of his profession to extract the meaning of a column at a glance, allowed his eye to rest a moment on the strong, shapely thumb which held the paper without a trace of unsteadiness, and said, raising his eyes to the minister's face:

"Well?"

"Don't you see?"

"An odd coincidence—certainly."

"It is more than a coincidence—she is Mrs. Merton."

"A widow, I suppose?"

"A widow! She is Mrs. Merton—Mrs. J. Sandford Merton, I tell you."

He spoke with that natural emphasis one uses in pointing out a fact he is surprised that another has missed. Not a muscle of Searle's face stirred; there was only a hint of new light in his eyes.

"You know what you are talking about, I suppose?"

"Know?" The tone was fresh and breezy. "I ought to know; I married them."

"Married—whom?"

"The late Mr. James Sandford Merton and the woman who now occupies his former residence. More than that, I baptized their child."

"But Sandford Merton was unmarried—or supposed to be. How did it happen? Why was nothing known of it?" The reporter's tone was severe. He thought he was unearthing one of those follies which are worse than crimes.

The minister turned to a drawer of his desk, took out a small flexible-covered book and opened it to a particular place. Turning to his auditor with his finger between the leaves, he said:

"This is how it happened; I have only time to give you the outlines. I had just been settled over a church in Colorado, when the summer vacation came and my flock scattered to the mountains—some for health and some for profit—pleasuring and prospecting, you know. I went to Leadville desiring to study the great mining-camp which was then in the height of its prosperity. It was crowded with all sorts of greedy seekers for wealth. I made myself one of the crowd, so far as appearance was concerned, at least; spent my days in wandering about the camp, working, prospecting, observing—and passed my nights 'on the sawdust' with the rest of them. Lodgings were scarce and dear, so that floor-room and sawdust were the ordinary accommodations. I might have obtained better quarters, but I always liked to rough it—probably because I was never under any necessity to do so. For some reason—perhaps because I did not indulge in profanity—they called me 'Parson.' I had some thought of quitting my charge and taking up a work of my own among that rough crowd, and have often regretted that I did not. I think I like common men—strong men. Somehow, I seem to understand them—better than some do, at least.

"One night the owner of the 'shebang' in which I lodged called me aside and asked me, with many winks and shrugs, if I could 'manage to hitch a couple.' He explained that there was a man in the house who wanted a minister—or at least 'one who could act the minister'—to perform the marriage ceremony. I did not think of the significance of his words at first, and when I did, thought I might prevent a crime. So I told him I had frequently performed this duty. He assured me the man was all right—would be 'down with the tin,' and all that; and almost before I had time to think, ushered me into another room, where, in the presence of a motley crowd of witnesses, I united in the bonds of matrimony a man I came afterward to know as James Sandford Merton and Letitia Espey, who now bears his name."

"But why was this fact so long concealed?" asked Searle. "He was not generally supposed to have a wife."

"No one had any suspicion of the truth until just before his death. The man whom I united in wedlock to this woman was known as James Sandford. He was a noted gambler who had just 'struck carbonates,' as the saying then was on account of the peculiar character of the argentiferous deposit at Leadville. She had become enamored of him as a school-girl. He was a highly-cultured and attractive man, you remember. Her parents, knowing nothing of his family or connections, very naturally objected to his attentions on account of his dissolute habits. When the shaft of the Evening Star reached 'carbonates' and became at once worth millions, his first act was to telegraph to her the news of his good fortune;

the next to write her to come to Leadville and be married. She was young, impulsive, loved the man, and the course her people had pursued had roused a spirit of opposition rather than inclined her to compliance with their wishes. She was romantic, too, and the idea of marrying a 'carbonate prince' of fabulous wealth, and reigning a sort of barbaric queen of beauty among the heterogeneous population of the great mining-camp, was no doubt alluring to the girlish fancy of one not accustomed to luxury. That he had any idea of contracting a legal marriage is hardly to be supposed. He no doubt intended it to be a sham ceremony merely to satisfy her scruples. I doubt whether many of the spectators believed it to be anything more. She was a very beautiful woman — she is still beautiful—and he did not mean to mar his pleasure by awakening her fears or driving her to despondency. He wished her to be happy in order that her happiness might enhance his enjoyment. He probably regarded the ceremony as a roaring farce, though I did my best to make it impressive; and when it was over, wrote a certificate on the fly-leaf of a little copy of the Testament I carried, and required the parties to sign the same. A number of the audience signed it also, as witnesses. There it is."

He handed the book to Searle as he spoke.

"It is a crude enough record," he continued, "but you will find there some names which have since become pretty well known. One is now a judge; one became the governor of a State; and two of them have been United States Senators. They represent a good many millions now, but there was sawdust on all their backs then. I intended to have made the bride a present of this volume, but circumstances prevented. I left the camp the next morning and never returned. I sent her by mail from

Denver, however, a duly-authenticated certificate of her marriage.

"A year afterward James Sandford disappeared. Not a trace of him could be found. He left his wife two thousand dollars; informed her their marriage was a sham; that he had 'blown in' the entire sum he had received for his share of the Evening Star, except four thousand dollars, of which he left her half. He advised her to make the best use she could of it, as she would never see him again. Very few believed these statements, which he took care should be made public. Made desperate by this exposure, and too proud to appeal to the sympathy of her people, the deserted woman came to the place where I was settled, to ascertain whether the marriage was a fraud or not. I was absent—camping in the mountains with a friend and his family. Not deterred by this unexpected difficulty, she followed our trail and found our camp a hospital. I was delirious; my friend, his wife, and the youngest child, a boy, were also prostrated with mountain-fever, which was epidemic in the region that year. The other child, a girl of twelve, was the only one able to bring water from the spring hard by. Mrs. Merton (Sandford was the name she then bore) installed herself as nurse. My friend and his boy died.

"When we returned, she found a home with the widow. There her child was born. It was baptized, and the mother joined our church. Half the money she had left she spent in searching for her husband. Getting no trace of him—she had in fact no clew—she came East, donned a widow's garb, and began the struggle to support herself and child. I heard of her occasionally, through the widow of my friend, until I came here. After that I knew nothing of her until I saw her in church last Sunday."

"How does it happen that she made no claim to recognition during Merton's life?"

"She was unaware of his identity. You see, the dashing, be-whiskered gambler of Leadville was an altogether different person from the smooth-faced pattern of propriety who loitered about the exclusive purlieus of the Haut Ton Club and worshiped at the Golden Lilies. There was always something familiar about him to me, but I could never exactly place him in my memory. I doubt if he ever knew me in Leadville by any other name than 'the Parson,' which in miners' slang meant nothing. I do not know that he had ever seen me, except during the ceremony, and probably my appearance had changed as well as his. I do not think he recognized either my name or person, though now that you speak of it, I do remember having heard that he opposed my call to the Golden Lilies. That may have been simply because of the locality from which I came, however. Of course, the fear of detection must have been constantly before him, and probably accounts for his rather secluded life.

"It was not until I received a letter from him a few weeks before his death that any suspicion of his identity occurred to me. You will observe that the name James Sandford, attached to the record of the marriage in my book here, is written in a peculiar manner; the second initial, S, being made first, and connected by a back stroke with the first, J; and the two names completed at one effort without removing the pen from the paper. It has, too, a peculiar boldness and strength, which attract attention. The same things are apparent in the signature of this letter. As soon as my eye fell on it the truth flashed upon me. The resemblance which had so long haunted me became at once distinct and positive. Very singularly, I learned that this was not his usual signature; and on looking through the church records, I find that whenever he signed as an officer of the church, it was in a strained, angular hand, very unlike this signature. Perhaps the fact that he was laboring under some excitement on account of the strike may have led him to revive the old habit. Association of ideas often produces singular results, and the riot which had been going on before his window all day when this letter was written, must have powerfully stirred the latent chords of memory of the rough times he had witnessed at Leadville, when he bore the name of James Sandford."

"How did Mrs. Merton learn of this?"

"I telegraphed at once to the lady with whom she had lived in Colorado. She had lost sight of her; so I put an advertisement in the *Herald* which brought her here in time to attend her husband's funeral. Perhaps she saw him before his death—I do not know about that."

"And that is all the—the acquaintance you have had with her?"

"Every bit. I have often felt ashamed for having done so little in acknowledgment of my obligations to her. Many women, finding us in the condition she did, would have left us to die. So, in a sense, I owed her my life, and would have been glad to do something to show my gratitude; but she is not one for whom it is easy to do favors."

"You do not know where she has been since she left Colorado?"

"Haven't the least idea."

"Nor what has been her character or occupation?"

"I have no doubt her life has been quite above reproach. She is not one of the women who go to the bad; she might die of overwork or starve, but she would never deteriorate."

"You seem to have great confidence in her?"

The journalist watched the man whom he had been subjecting to such searching, but unrecognized, cross-examination, with an expressionless scrutiny that was almost breathless.

"She happens to be one of the few women I can understand—or think I can, at least. That is why I feel sure of what she would do under given circumstances."

"What stand are you going to take in regard to her—now?"

"I am going to go and ask her if I can do anything that may 'to her do ease, or grace to me,' as Shakespeare puts it."

"You realize, of course, the position in which this article puts you with reference to her—in the public estimation?"

He touched the *Thunderbolt*, which had fallen to the floor between them, with his foot, as he spoke.

"*Seeks* to put me, you mean? Well, yes—I suppose I do."

"You know that if you visit her now, such an act will be liable to misconstruction?"

"Probably: just as the fact that I did not might be considered a proof of guilt."

"So you persist in going?"

"Of course, man! She is a *woman*—a good, pure woman, as I believe—a Christian woman, battling for her good name and her child's inheritance! Have I, a Christian minister, any right to stand aloof and leave her to fight it out alone?"

"It may cost you a good deal—the loss of your position—in society, perhaps in the church."

"So much the more reason I should not hesitate. I might truly be esteemed a coward as well as a hypocrite if I did."

"What are you going to do about—that?" nodding toward the *Thunderbolt.*

"That!" said Eastman, picking up the paper and glancing at it with a peculiar smile. "Nothing. Why?"

"You ought to bring suit—an action for libel, you know —or at least publish a denial."

"I suppose people will expect something of the kind."

"No doubt; and if you will allow me to say so, I think you owe it to your friends."

"You think they will believe those—those imputations?"

"Some of them, no doubt."

"Do *you?*"

"Well—no—I don't!"—emphatically.

"Thank you"—laughing. "I thought not; you are too much of a man."

"But others——"

"Excuse me; would you give much for the friendship of a man who would believe such a report about yourself?"

"Candidly, I wouldn't; but the Church—you know people are very sensitive."

"Yes; the smuttiest sheep wants a very white shepherd. I suppose Merton, now, would have been greatly shocked at such a thing."

"But ought you to allow the Church to suffer for your misfortune?"

"I am responsible for my acts, not for others' suppositions. When I entered the ministry, I pledged myself to do and say nothing unbecoming my position and to devote myself to the Master's work. I have tried to do so; and I haven't time to go about explaining imaginary appearances or throwing stones at every puppy that chooses to flirt mud on my vestments. I am not responsible for men's suspicions or their effect on the church's prosperity. I will try and steer clear of evil in word and act, and the Lord must lookout for my reputation, if indeed," he added reverently, "it be a matter of any consequence to him. It is quite possible that his cause may be better served by my debasement than by my justification. If so, why should I demur? At least he has made my duty plain in this matter. If I should fail to visit Mrs. Merton now, it would be a cowardly imputation upon one of his flock, to whom he has sent me to minister, and of whom I know nothing except what is creditable and worthy; and I am going—*right now!*"

He unbuttoned the velvet smoking-jacket, as he rose, and stepping into his bedroom, came back in a moment, dressed for the street.

"I beg your pardon," he said pleasantly, "I quite forget to ask you to excuse me. I suppose there is nothing more?"

"Not much," answered Searle, standing hat in hand beside his chair. "You have seen the *Breeze?*"

"I merely glanced at it."

"You observed that it did not have any of that—that 'rot' in it."

"I noticed that; I suppose I am indebted to you."

"On the contrary, I am your debtor," said Searle, his face losing its professional, non-committal aspect, and lighting up with pleasure. "I came around this morning to make my acknowledgments."

"How is that?"

"I saved the *Breeze* from making a bad 'break' last night in this matter and was made managing editor in consequence this morning."

"Accept my congratulations. If I have to leave the Golden Lilies, I shall come to you for a job."

"You shall have it, if the Belt and Cross-Cut don't outbid us."

The two men laughed as they shook hands. They were as unlike as possible, but they understood each other.

"And now," continued Searle, "how much are you going to allow me to publish of what I have learned yesterday and to-day?"

"That depends," answered the minister, "entirely on yourself. You are a better judge than I of what ought to be said, under the circumstances. You know my sentiments, and I leave the matter in your hands. So far as I am concerned, I have nothing to conceal. I have not always been wise, but I have tried to be honest. As for Mrs. Merton, I have, of course, no right to authorize you to publish her story. You had better see her or Metziger about that."

"Would you object—I mean do you suppose she would consider it an intrusion—if—if I should accompany you—now—to call upon her, you know?"

The hardened reporter actually blushed as he faltered this request. He was so afraid that his auditor would see through his transparent stratagem, and understand that he did not want him to go alone. But the simple-hearted minister did not imagine that the request was proffered for his own sake, and that the Master whom he had just bluntly declared must look out for his reputation, was taking heed for his servant's good name, while he performed his duty unmindful of the consequences to himself.

"I am sure she would be glad to see you, and I should be glad to make you acquainted; you are certain to like each other," he answered.

In his heart Murvale Eastman said: "I am glad of this; it will be a great advantage to her; and I shall feel as if she were not so much alone in this struggle. Now, if Lilian will go with me to see her, it will make her task easier still."

What a blunderer he was, to be sure! Almost the last thing he had done the night before, in the exuberance of his delight, was to write a note to Lilian asking her to go with him to call upon Mrs. J. Sandford Merton! Surely such a man needed the special watch-care of heaven; and this guardianship he received all unconsciously to himself when, ten minutes later, he rang the bell at Mrs. Merton's door and was ushered into her presence with the managing editor of the *Morning Breeze*. The Press had extended its protection to the faithful but imperiled representative of the Church.

"Good-by," said Searle as he shook hands with Murvale Eastman on the street corner an hour afterward. "I wish I could tell you how much I respect you—how I like you, in fact. There's not many men I care for, but it's done me good to know you—lots of good."

There was a hint of moisture in the fellow's eyes and a tremor in his tone that surprised the young minister.

"I don't belong to any church—never did," he continued impetuously, "but I want to; I want to join the Golden Lilies—if you'll let me—me and my wife. I don't know much about doctrine, but I believe in religion—such religion as yours, that is. I don't know as I've got much of it myself, but I'd like to have more, and I—I want you to help me—if you can.

"Don't trouble yourself about this matter," he continued, jerking his thumb over his shoulder toward Mrs.

Merton's residence. "She's all right; I know a good woman; can't anybody take me in on that line of goods. We'll manage that matter—don't you be afraid—Metziger and I. The *Thunderbolt* will find out they're at the wrong end of the gun. We'll attend to her, too. Metziger's got some clients—ladies, you know—and there's his wife and mine, and my sister—wife of a bank president—and perhaps the 'old man's,' too—sure, if I can get a minute with her. Oh, we'll straighten this out! There's my car! Good-by."

He shook the minister's hand again, swung upon a passing car, and ten minutes later was in consultation with his subordinates on the staff of the *Breeze*.

Murvale Eastman stood looking after him with a heart full of grateful surprise. He thought as he walked homeward what a mistake it is to say that the age of chivalry is past. The knights do not now wear helmets and carry swords, but wear derby hats, whistle for street-cars, and fight dragons whose leaden teeth are fastened on great cylinders which crush and tear sheets of milk-white paper, and stamp black lies and foul scandals thereon. The self-forgetful dunce never thought to add that they sometimes wear chimney-pots and white neck-ties, too!

The city was struck dumb with amazement later in the day, when the evening papers announced that "Mrs. Metziger, wife of the eminent lawyer, Mrs. Musgrove, the banker's lady, Mrs. Windvale, the wife of the proprietor of the *Breeze*, and Mrs. Percy Searle, the wife of the new editor of that journal, called to-day upon Mrs. Merton;" and expressed the "fear that one of our distinguished morning contemporaries has made an unfortunate mistake."

CHAPTER XX.

DODGING THE BLOW.

When he reached home, Murvale Eastman found awaiting him a note from Lilian Kishu. He seized upon it eagerly, not doubting that it contained fresh evidence of her love. He did not faint when he had read it, though his lips were ashy as he laid it back upon the desk and sat down to think what it might mean to him. It was very brief, merely informing him of her desire that the engagement between them should terminate. She gave no reason, asked no explanation, returned no keepsakes, and required the surrender of none on his part. It was a very diplomatic note, offering no loop-hole for reply, and which would yet have provoked to resentful protest a man of less exalted regard for female character.

As a fact, the letter was more the result of dissatisfaction than lack of confidence in her betrothed. She wanted to love Murvale Eastman. She admired and esteemed him above all other men; there was no doubt of that: but did she love him? Had she that passionate longing for his companionship that would make his presence elysium and his absence a positive bereavement? Would she rather pass her life with him than with any other? Had she complete content in his presence? Did her heart indorse the verdict of her brain? Why did she always wish him a little different from what he was? These questions troubled her.

She had been torn with jealousy on account of the conversation she had overheard between Murvale and Mrs. Merton, of which she had, half-unconsciously, given her father a hint in her anxiety to discover the identity of the beautiful lady. Her lover's manner in their conversation upon the subject, however, set her suspicion entirely at rest. Whatever might be the relation between him and the lady in black, on whose supposed intimacy with the young minister the *Thunderbolt* had based its sensational *exposé* of his hypocrisy and unworthiness, Lilian Kishu felt perfectly confident that time would show it to have been not only without fault on his part, but entirely creditable to him. She even wished, and almost expected, that her unexplained dismissal would bring him to her full of angry resentment at the imputations cast upon him, imperiousy demanding the retraction of her words and the renewal of their plight. To such a demand she would have yielded glad obedience. She liked manhood, power, and a love that would not brook denial.

Lilian Kishu was not mercenary. She liked money for the ease and comfort it brought, but she had as little sympathy with her father's worship of wealth, as with her mother's insatiable desire for social distinction. She appreciated to a high degree the manly qualities of Murvale Eastman. She felt that he was worthy of any woman's devotion. How quietly, with what undoubting composure, he sought the path of duty and, when found, followed it as if it were the common thoroughfare of life. But when he had accomplished his purpose—done what he conceived to be his duty—there was an end of it all. He did not seem to care whether the world knew how he had done it, or even whether he had done it at all.

Ah! if he would not be quite so composed, so matter-of-fact, so utterly "of course," in regard to himself! If he would only act the hero as well as be one! Why did he not beard the lion and compel her father and all those who were scheming against him to desist, to apologize? She did not doubt that he could, if he only would. Why did he not let the world know how, through the scorching heat of summer, he had stood day after day for a month on the platform of a car, learning, as he had told her, not merely to do a driver's work, but how a driver feels and what he thinks while doing it? Oh, he could be such a splendid man, if he only would! And she would so delight to love him if he would only give her love something to cling to, to feed on!

She did not at all object to his new doctrines, if he would only vaunt himself a little on account of them, be a little heroic about the matter. If he would only demand approval; allow her to extol him, and to feel that her acquiescence was imperiously required because it was *his* act, she would have been glad to acknowledge his right to dictate what her thought should be. If he had only asked her advice, made his action somehow dependent upon her approval, she would be quite content. If he would even be jealous, it would be some consolation. Only think of his driving the very car on which she had ridden with Marsh, day after day, and being content and happy because *she* was happy. Yet she had flirted outrageously; and had enjoyed it, too. Frank was such a pleasant fellow! Of course, she did not mean anything by it. What was Marsh to her or she to him? Only two children, just a boy and girl who had played together all their lives, and flirted with each other ever since she could remember. He thought a good deal of her; she knew that. For that matter she liked him, too. He was about the most agreeable man she had ever known—for an hour's chat, that is. That was all. He did not amount to anything, would never accomplish anything. He was not only poor, but he lacked striking qualities, was content to enjoy, rather than do. Yet he was an audacious lover. He would run away with her in a moment if he had but half a chance. She was certain of that, and was not sure she would not enjoy it if he should. But as for marrying him—there really had never been any more prospect of that than—than of her marrying the Prince of Moraydin with his empty coffers, empty head, and empty life, which had so long been at her disposal.

She had, without really knowing it, the universal American contempt for the man who does not achieve, do something for himself. It is the inheritance of our distinctive individuality. With all his snobbery, this was at the bottom of Wilton Kishu's character. He could not have loved himself or enjoyed the adulation of others, if he had not felt that it was in great measure due to his well-attested power of achievement. He had wrested fortune from adversity. No man could have started in life with poorer prospects. As for family, all he ever owed to his was the fact of life. Education—he had what he could get. How he got it he could hardly tell; and what was its extent would be still more difficult to define. He had picked up knowledge, especially knowledge of men, as he went along. He had not found it necessary to know many things. It was easier and cheaper, he thought, all things considered, to pay other people to do his thinking for him. What he did not know, he hired some one to find out, and then used the knowledge for his own advantage. In this consisted his power; upon this rock his pride was builded. Why should not men flatter him?

Was he not a king served by slaves, lifted up on their shields, living on their lives? He did not wear a crown; his slaves were not bound by statute or prescription. So much the more worthy of honor the man who compelled them to serve by sheer force of his own brain, without any consciousness of subjection on their part!

He was one of the lords of the new feudalism whom the marvelously-trained slaves of science blindly serve—a coal baron for whom a lean and hungry geologist had, for a pittance, pointed the way to untold treasures stored up by the Infinite in unknown ages. The gnomes of the mine fought for the privilege of delving in eternal night for a few paltry pence, for his benefit. Lawyers taught him to reap profitable harvests from the weakness and neglect of others—harvests their own hands were too weak or their hearts too timid to permit them to gather. Literary men sold him their wares, erasing the trade-mark of their brain and allowing them to go forth to the world under the stamp he affixed. He had never written a column for the *Thunderbolt* in his life, but he was regarded as the inspiring genius of its editorial page. Timid eunuchs of the pen brought him the fruits of their toil; unrecognized genius begged him for the opportunity to wear out life in anonymous endeavor. His hunchbacked secretary was a familiar who dispensed the dole he grimly denominated "generosity" to deluded victims on whose brains he fed fat his pride. He thus had become a man of some note in literature, though he had read few books and could not have written in a decade a hundred pages which would have passed the censorship of his own managing editor. Men did well to praise one who had conquered so many realms, and none the less that he had done much of it by proxy. Is it not a principle of the law that what one does by another he does himself?

Wilton Kishu not without reason was proud of his achievements; and his daughter, knowing but half the truth, delighted in them hardly less than he. In this respect, Murvale Eastman fully gratified her pride. His sturdy manhood went squarely across the line of precedent, unconscious of the fact that he was breaking down the most sacred barriers and trampling on theories which had grown reverend with the lapse of centuries. But why did he not boast of his achievements? He would utter no word of exultation even to her. Where was the glory of winning battles, unless one called upon the world to count the slain? Why rend the lion if no one were to know whose hand had done it?

If he were only a little more like Marsh, she could worship him; but if he were, he would never take her devotion for granted as he did. She would teach him a lesson, she would bring him to her feet, if she had to scourge his soul to do it!

So when informed that it was her father's wish that she should sever all relations with the young minister, she assented, with apparent sorrow and many sincere expressions of incredulity in regard to the aspersions cast upon him, but with secret joy at the thought that she was free. She did not expect to be free for a great while—she did not wish to be—but she meant to enjoy her freedom and give her pursuer a long chase before she yielded again. So she posted at the same instant the letter which told Murvale Eastman that his love was vain, and a playful note to Marsh, which she believed would bring him at once to her side. Her mother, thrifty woman! wrote a letter to the Prince of Moraydin, advising him of a favorable change in the situation, and counseling that he make hay while the sunshine lasted.

Mrs. Kishu was not a woman of remarkable gifts, and had not found it as easy to make her way in society as her husband had done in the world of business. Her education was defective, and her manner hardly better than her husband's. But wealth, which hides a man's defects, is apt to magnify a woman's. So while the world fawned on Mr. Kishu, it was wont to laugh at his wife. She was almost envious of her daughter for taking a place in society she could not hold. People spoke of "Mr. Kishu and his daughter," rarely of his wife. She had taken a great fancy to the Prince of Moraydin, who had flattered her to the top of her bent, and it had been the dream of her later years to triumph over those who had slighted her, by bringing about a marriage between her daughter and this impoverished descendant of a half-royal house. She wished to adorn her American womanhood with the title a dissolute king had bestowed on an exacting mistress! She had made little progress in this direction thus far, but she was not easy to discourage.

Murvale Eastman realized none of the influences that shaped the conduct of his betrothed. Indeed, he hardly speculated in regard to her motives at all. She was his ideal. He was ready to die for her, but he could not conceive that she could ever desire him to do wrong or abstain from doing right. Such a thought would have meant to him disillusionment, indeed, but hardly disenthrallment. If he could have believed the truth in regard to her, he might have ceased, perhaps, to desire her, although he would have gone on loving what he had dreamed her to be, just the same. But he did not once suspect the truth. He did not believe that the pretended revelations of the *Thunderbolt* had anything to do with her action. He was sure she could not think so meanly of him as to give credence to such imputations. No; she had just wakened to the knowledge that she could not be happy in a life-union with him; this was his thought. He remembered her words the night before. He saw now that he had misinterpreted them. They were only another evidence of inherent dissonance between their natures. Now that he thought of it, there had been many such. He wondered that he had never recognized them before. She had sought to love him, believed she did, no doubt, but finally her eyes had been opened to the consciousness that life with him would not be that intimate and perfect harmony which marriage should insure. He did not blame her. He was inclined to believe she was right. It was not her fault, however. It was not his fault, either. He had sought to make himself in all things worthy of her love. The very thought that she loved him had made him especially careful to do or think nothing unworthy of such high privilege, and had stimulated his wish to achieve whatever he might that should reflect honor upon her choice. His was a knightly and chivalrous nature, and she had been the lady for whom he had been glad to do and dare.

She had been a potent influence in the resolution he had taken to study the life which was about him. He had often dreamed of the rapture he would feel should good result from the course he had taken, in saying to her:

"This I did for your sake. Your beauty, your purity and innocence have brought happiness to these homes, good to these souls. Because of the inspiration of your love, I did these things, and the fruits of my endeavor are the tributes of my love."

This was what he had meant to say in the park the day before. It was a silly notion, but love makes the best men fools, and very often all the more foolish because they are good men and true, who cannot measure meaner natures; or if they can, have put their love upon a pinnacle too high to permit them to believe that the weakness of common humanity can ever come nigh it.

Had Lilian Kishu been a man, Eastman would have detected and perhaps pitied her weakness. He might even have resented it, though his was one of those natures that have little room for resentment.

The pastor of the Golden Lilies was an optimist, not in the sense of believing all men to be good, but in believing that there is something of good in all natures; and he counted it the especial duty of his profession to find out and strengthen this inherent tendency. The trouble was that he had never thought of Lilian Kishu as a human being; he had only dreamed of her, as a woman, the woman he loved, the woman of all the world worthiest of his love. He came nearer than anybody else, perhaps, to a just appreciation of Wilton Kishu; but he neither feared his strength nor despised his weakness. He had no desire to do him harm, and was very far from wishing to humiliate him. He only wished to strengthen the better qualities of his nature, and make him an instrument of good to others. He was not one who believed that religion of necessity instantly revolutionizes a man's moral nature. He realized that an essentially mean man still remains mean, no matter how sincere his Christian belief and experience may be; he only believed that Christian thought and experience would, especially under wise and kindly guidance, make him gradually less mean and, little by little, subordinate the tendency to do and think unworthy things.

This was what growth in grace meant, to him, a steady development of better tendencies—not a miraculous condition, but a natural one—just as natural as God's love. Had he applied the same reasoning to Lilian Kishu, she would have been wax in his hands, would have recalled her dismissal, and if she had not justified his ideal would at least have submitted to his guidance. But he never thought of her as an imperfect being. She satisfied his desire; she rested his vision, and the soul which he fancied informed her loveliness, fulfilled all his longing for companionship. He thought of her as the twin of his soul, the complement of his simple, upright nature. And it is by no means certain that she was not, if he could only have discerned the truth in regard to her.

This power was denied him. As he paced his room during the long hours of the night that followed, he never once thought of appeal from her decision, any more than he thought of the watchful scrutiny of the landlady, who counted his steps and construed his sleeplessness according to the measure of her own moral nature. She could only translate the pitiful wofulness of those wakeful hours on the hypothesis of conscious guilt; for, unlike her lodger, she not only believed in inherent evil, but she did *not* believe in inherent good.

To Murvale Eastman, this blighting of his fondest dream was only a supreme affliction which was to be borne manfully and uncomplainingly. He no more thought of murmuring at it than he would at any other inscrutable dispensation of Providence. He would have suffered hardly more had death robbed him of the object of his devotion; but even then he would not have murmured.

So now, the rejected lover, not less bereft, folded away the visible mementoes of his lost love; turned down the brightest page in his memory, and hopeless but resolute, sought with anxious consideration and agonizing prayer to find the path of duty. All his thought had so centered about his love, that his whole environment seemed animate with its memory. How could he ever again officiate in the Golden Lilies! Every nook was alive with some reminiscent thought of her. The Divine Head, instead of pitying love for all, would look down upon him now in sorrowful commiseration of his weakness. Even the streets were thronged with cruel memories. The new, grand work he had undertaken was consecrated to her almost as much as to heaven. They had never been much together, but she had never been absent from his thought since he had first looked into her eyes. He had always dreamed of her in his work and on his walks. Could he bear to face those mocking ghosts of memory? He was afraid he could not. It seemed to him that men would read in his face the sorrow lurking in his heart. How could he meet his friends upon the morrow, how face his enemies? What could he say to excuse his depression, his gloom? He could not be silent and he was too proud to tell the truth. He felt that he must go away. He must have some time—a little time at least—alone with God and nature. He did not mean to shirk his duty—did not wish to hide away from men—but only to be alone long enough to determine what was his duty and how he should best perform it.

But where could he go? His eyes fell upon his fishing-tackle hanging on the wall, as he asked himself this question, and his thought went back to the last day's sport he had enjoyed with it. He remembered a lonely stretch of river where there were few houses, and the clear stream flashed and sparkled as it raced over rocky shoals with quiet stretches between, full of dark, deep haunts where the gamy bass loves to hide. The timber had been cut away; the rocky hillsides were almost bare save where the undergrowth timorously clung and hid among the gray granite ledges. It was nature—stern, denuded, pitiless nature—but though man had marred it, he had not remained to destroy its charm. He himself had blundered on it—if it is ever a blunder to follow a sportsman's instinct—and in the bright autumn weather, wading the ripples and casting from the shore into the shaded pools, had passed a day full of hope, fear, and triumph, a day still rich in memories of straining rod, clicking reel, and hissing line, of thrilling strikes, doubtful struggles, disappointing escapes, and gratifying captures. How pleasant had been his thought when, weary but successful, he sought at night the shelter of a lonely farm-house! How grateful was the silence, how restful the thought of isolation from the world! Thither he would go, coming back only in time for his Sabbath service. He hunted up a time-card, and found that a train which left in the gray of early morning would take him to his destination in season for a day's sport.

He took down his rod, examined the reel, tested the tips, turned over the pages of his fly-book, hunted up his sporting-suit, not forgetting his long wading-boots, threw a few needed things, including a book or two, into a hand-bag, pushed aside the heap of unanswered letters on his desk, and wrote two notes, one to Searle and another to Metziger, informing them of his determination, and telling them where he might be found in case it should be necessary to communicate with him. Then he wrote another. Over and over again he essayed to frame a satisfactory reply to that delicately-perfumed note. He loved Lilian

Kishu too tenderly to utter any reproach, and was too honest to assume a sentiment that he did not feel. His effort finally resolved itself into two short sentences:

"I have received your letter. It is, of course, a matter solely for your decision."

Then he went softly out, so softly that even the watchful landlady did not hear him, dropped the letters into the first mail box, and long before the slumbering city awoke was whirled away toward the harbor of refuge he had chosen.

As the train left the station, he heard the cry of the earliest newsboy:

"*Breeze—Morning Breeze!* All about the Rev. Eastman and the pretty widow!"

He was grateful then that he had escaped before the streets became verberant with such shrill echoes. He never thought of the wisdom or unwisdom of his course or how it would appear to others. For once in his life he had thought only of himself, and simply ran away from what he feared he was not brave enough to endure with composure. Had he considered only his personal advantage, he could not have acted more wisely. There are times when absence is the stoutest champion innocence can have. The landlady heard the cry and made haste to learn what new infamy had been alleged against the lodger whose restless steps had robbed her of slumber. Already she was questioning whether she would not ask him to give up his room. He was a model lodger, but the reputation of her house must be maintained.

When she had read the three leaded columns in which the new editor of the *Breeze* had told with modest fervor, and yet with discretion and apparent reluctance, the story of his new-found friend, with just a hint of regret that inexcusable misapprehension had linked his name discreditably with a lady who was destined to be an ornament to the city's best society, the good woman's cheek was wet with tears. She went and rapped lightly on her lodger's door, intending to tell him that his breakfast would be kept warm and that he would better sleep late.

The empty room frightened her. She feared—she hardly knew what she feared—but before night it was known throughout the city that Murvale Eastman had again disappeared, leaving no hint of his destination. The only information the *Thunderbolt* had upon the subject was an indignant denial that there was any engagement between the pastor of the Golden Lilies and Lilian Kishu. There were a few to whom this paragraph gave a key to Murvale Eastman's flight.

If the tide of public sentiment had set strong against the young divine the day before, the refluent wave was overwhelming. It was well for him that he was not present to feel its surge. Letters, telegrams, invitations, came pouring in. The callers were numbered by scores. The world was making apology for the wrong it had done him. Praise is far more perilous than blame; and the Power on whose wisdom Murvale Eastman relied, all unconsciously to him, had again saved him from danger of demoralization. The flood of adulation poured harmlessly by, while nature built up and strengthened the dikes of manly purpose.

CHAPTER XXI.

DAWN IN THE DESERT.

There is nothing more remarkable in human nature than the strength it gains from solitude. The human soul is like the mold in which a statue is cast. The glowing stream of molten metal may come fervid and flashing in a hundred fiery rills and fill full the waiting matrix, but the equilibrium of absolute repose is necessary to enable the seething mass to harden into form. So it is with a man into whose life the streams of thought have poured until heart and brain ache with overburdening fullness, when woes oppress and the demands of duty overwhelm, when hope is almost lost and doubt overshadows the future—then the soul cries out, with instinctive knowledge of its need, for silence, isolation, and the readjustment of the mental equilibrium which can be secured only in that moral vacuum where the subtle magnetism of God and nature alone is felt.

It is for this reason that the greatest natures have always been lovers of solitude. Shallow ones do not require it; they need often to be refilled. The babble of life's trickling rill is enough for them. If it brings a graver mystery than they can solve, its wofulness simply overwhelms or runs by them without strain or peril. Great souls cannot avoid great thoughts. They cannot put by the problems that confront humanity. The woes that threaten nations and peoples they cannot cast aside, nor save themselves from the impulse to lessen or to heal. To such natures solitude is the antechamber of the Infinite, the place where the soul renews its strength. They may mingle with the multitude, may feel its sorrows, share its joys, and seem to be of its life; but when the heart is full of molten, glowing, hissing thought, they must have silence, absolute exclusion from all disturbing forces, or the mold is broken, distorted, or perhaps consumed, and the statue which should have been a thing of beauty comes forth shattered, malformed—a shapeless monster, fit only to be broken up, refined, and lost in the glare of a new blast. Life is the field of action in which the world's heroes win immortality, but the armor of proof they wear and the weapons they wield must be forged in solitude. In the Norse legends, the maker of the weapon of magic temper wrought always underground, where even his hammer-strokes could not be heard by the world.

The greatest of the world's lives have gathered strength for their work from solitude. Moses in the wilderness of Horeb first learned the will of the Divine, and in solitude upon the Mountain of the Law was enabled to define and adjust the forces of the weak and debased Israelites, so as to develop the noble fabric of the Jewish republic and sow the seeds of Christian civilization. The Christ lived with humanity enough to feel its impulses, but in seclusion taught his disciples the mystery which was to redeem and purify the earth-life, and communed with the Father in solitude. Buddha and Mahomet generated in solitude the forces which have for ages controlled the thought and life of nations. In the silence of the monk's cell Luther grew into the thought-shaper of centuries. Cromwell, diking the marshes where the hissing sea broke through, gathered strength to say, "Take away that fool's bauble!" Washington grew to the stature of immortality in the shadow of the forests he explored, and Lincoln mingled with men only to escape from a brooding sense of hopeless impotency to perform the wonders which in solitude his perfervid nature saw waiting to be done.

To this quality of human nature, perhaps, is due the fact that few of those who have beneficently affected the world's life have been what we term "practical" men. The "practical" man, the ideal of to-day's aspiration on which we are so assiduously shaping to-morrow's life, is not he who evolves great ideas; but simply one who bends the forces of nature, the tendencies of society, or the accidents of life to mere personal advantage. Fulton, who invented the steamboat, Stephenson, who created the railway, and thousands of others who have unfolded the powers of nature by the employment of which the universal life is blessed with new powers and hitherto undreamed of joys—these are little esteemed in comparison with the "practical" men who have levied toll upon such inventions and compelled the world to pay tribute to their greed. We build monuments to them sometimes—when they are dead; but we are apt to sneer at them while living. The buccaneer who steals their thoughts and makes merchandise of their blood is far more highly esteemed. Even those who redeem nations and establish new civilizations are accounted bad models for the youth of to-day unless they are also misers and plunderers.

Columbus was only a poor, feeble "crank" who showed the way by which more "practical" men grew rich. There is among the youth of the present a hardly concealed contempt for Lincoln because he was content to be poor, and of Grant because he was fitted rather to save a nation than to outshine others in the struggle for wealth.

A mother of to-day would count herself unfortunate, if not accursed, to know that her son would be a dreamer, a forerunner, a Columbus, a Fulton; but if assured that he would be a Cortez, a Pizarro, a bold seizer of other men's lands; or an American railway magnate or millionaire monopolist—a potentate who should seize the treasures of light and heat and power which God has treasured up for ages against the hour of humanity's need, and dole them out to the poor for pence coined from their sweat-drops and blood-drops—ah! such a prophecy would make her heart throb with joy, and once made known, would compel her envious sisters to greet her with the ancient acclaim: "Blessed art thou among women!" "Practical" men, not heroic ones, are the ideal of to-day's life. Nay, we have gone so far as to laugh at heroism as well as love. "Gold, hard and heavy and yellow and cold," is the only material out of which To-day constructs the standard by which it measures human worth. The milled edge of the dollar is the accepted unit of comparison betwixt soul and soul.

We know that the man of great wealth is rarely one from whom humanity derives good, never the one from whom it derives the greatest. Now and then one scatters his massed stores, when he can control them no more, or even while living devotes them to specific uses from which good may come, and we make such exceptions an excuse for all the ills resulting from the selfishness which finds enjoyment only in possessing more than another.

We know that liberty, intelligence, justice, and all those principles of equity on which the welfare of mankind depend, owe little to the munificence of the rich, and much to the persevering efforts of those to whom necessity has taught the need and glory of self-sacrifice; that it is from such that mental, moral, and political progress springs, and it is to such that humanity looks for their perpetuation.

We know, too, that woe and suffering and want and crime and misery rarely arise from any lack of beneficence on nature's part. The earth yields enough for all, and hunger and want prevail largely because the rich circumscribe and restrict her abundance in order to increase their individual excess. Poverty and crime might be almost eliminated if the strong were willing to succor the weak and stimulate the fainting to fresh endeavor. Poverty and crime are, in truth, only the scourges by which God seeks to drive out of the temple of the human heart —that temple in which the Christ ordained that the All-Father should everywhere be worshiped—the types of greed and selfishness, the lusts of envy and dominion, which make the Dollar of to-day the equivalent, as a symbol of power, with the Sword of yesterday.

The feudalism of the past was that of birth and rank. The right to rule, won by the father, descended to the son. To-day the right to control the destiny, ay, the very lives of more thousands than were ever held in vassalage by any lord, descends by inheritance or bequest from the master of millions. The nobility of wealth to-day represents more power than the sword ever controlled. Is it less dangerous? Is the power of life and death less perilous because the weapon it wields is measured by Troy weight rather than by Avoirdupois? The rich are not all bad, nor were the feudal lords all tyrants. The nobility of feudalism no doubt represented a much higher level of intelligence, enterprise, and what is often termed public spirit, than those who were subject to their control. They had a right to claim to be the best, the bravest, the strongest, the sweetest life of that time. The trouble was not in the men, but in the power they represented, the power to restrict opportunity and compel subservience.

The evil lay in the power of the few and the helplessness of the many—the ability of the few to control and of the need of the many to serve. It matters nothing whether this power is attested by the crest of a noble or the seal of a corporation, the effect is the same. Whatever promotes mastery and enlarges the domain of subserviency and dependence, that imperils liberty. The fact that he who wields this power is a saint may make its exercise less irksome, but the evil is enhanced rather than diminished thereby, because of the lethargy which results. Injustice is bad enough, but submission to wrong infinitely worse.

Ah, but each one has now a chance to be the greatest! Such is the lottery of power which we call liberty! There is no privileged class, we say. All are freebooters on the high sea of prosperity. A short life and a merry one for us! Here's luck for the man at the top, and a curse for the poor devil at the bottom! Competition cures all ills! What if men are crushed? What if one man does hold a thousand by the throat? Have they not the same right to throttle him if they are brave enough and strong enough? This is liberty! This is civilization! This, we teach our children, is the best God offers or Christ promises to man! Is it true? We know it is false. Nevertheless, this we say is civilization. It differs from barbarism chiefly in the fact that it uses daintier weapons and its results are inheritable. In moral and purpose it is the same. Wilton Kishu is the type of its best results, a type much more highly esteemed than that represented by the silly Murvale Eastman, who ran away from his enemies, fled from the crowded city to determine what could be done, and to study in solitude the relations of his own individuality to the common welfare and advantage; to determine, in short, some foolish question of duty.

It is hard to tell how a man arrives at conclusions and solves knotty problems without consciously thinking of them at all. Yet it is one of the most familiar facts of every man's experience. Murvale Eastman's brain was in a whirl when he sped out of the slumbering city on his way to the haunt he had selected. Lilian Kishu, the Golden Lilies, the new friends he had made, the grand thoughts he had meant to advocate, the sick man in his study to whose impassioned words he owed so much, the imputations on himself, the enemies he must encounter, all these things were mingled in strange confusion in his thoughts. With them, too, was the knowledge that the one relative who had any interest in his welfare had cast him off. His aunt had notified him not only of disinherison, but of what affected him much more keenly, her displeasure at his conduct and distrust of his personal character. There was something ludicrous about the weak, silly woman's threat against one who was just stripping to the buff to defy the world, but it hurt him none the less. He loved his aunt in spite of her foibles, and knew that she worshiped him. She would no more execute her threat than destroy herself; but the fact that she could make it showed how widespread were the snares into which he might fall. If she lost faith, who would believe in him?

No wonder he felt confused, depressed, humiliated, weak! Every bright prospect had in an instant become dark. He did not once think of yielding, but said to himself that he must think it out—think it out *alone.* Yet he hardly gave the matter a conscious thought in the days that followed. From sunrise to sunset, all day long, he tramped up and down the sparkling river, wading the shallows, whipping the pools, talking with the barefooted lad who caught his bait and carried his captures, laughing at his own mishaps, exulting in his successes, breathing the fresh air, lounging in the sunshine, feeling all the time that God was near and the world afar off.

True, he saw strange sights. The shining ripples of his lost love's hair would float down the dashing stream, get tangled with his line, make his eyes unsteady, and almost paralyze his hand when he felt the swift strike of the fish and saw the surprised and angry victim leap into the air, shaking his head savagely, while the sparkling drops fell off his shining sides as he dropped again into the laughing stream, and shot back and forth across the swift current, seeking by every possible device of finny cunning to release himself from the fatal snare. Sometimes he saw her image reflected in the placid pool where he dropped his fly; and when he threw himself down among the fragrant autumn leaves to rest, his dreaming eyes were sure to see her drifting hopelessly away into the infinite depths of the blue autumn sky. Love will play such freaks even yet with men who are silly enough to believe that love is not incompatible with civilization. When he hunted out a quiet nook among the granite rocks in which to eat his plain but abundant mid-day meal, it is true his cares came trooping over the gray hillsides, perched in the painted foliage about him, and began to babble in the little rill at his side. But they fled away when he had finished his repast and stood up and laughed at their dolorous insistency, shouted until the hills echoed, sang until the birds and squirrels wondered, or seized his rod and began again the patient, absorbed quest of his prey which characterizes the true sportsman.

It mattered little whether his luck were good or bad, his captures many or few—when the night came and he [illegible] in spring, Nature

had eaten a hearty supper, chatted a while with the farmer folks, listened to the owls on the hillside, watched the weird moonlight as it cast fantastic shadows over hill and dale, and caught the music of the rippling stream which danced and sang under its curtain of white mist, though he saw his cares mustering to assail his pillow, he fell asleep before they could touch his eyelids. He had hardly time to pray for guidance, but the All-Father knew that every moment a brave soul was struggling for victory over itself. So the night breeze and silence brought healing.

Every morning he said to himself that he would think the matter out that day; but each succeeding night he slept without having stated premise or conclusion. Nevertheless, when Friday morning came the load had lifted. Nature's song of praise found an echo in his heart as soon as he saw the sunshine kissing the frosted leaves. All day long he sang amid his sport as if trouble had always been a stranger to his heart, songs of thankfulness and exultation, sometimes under his breath, when the line hissed hot through the boiling eddies, and anon in sonorous tones that echoed from the hillsides while he rested after the struggle. The uncouth lad who shared his sport wondered at his glee, but caught the sunshine from his face, and when, tired but cheery, they dragged home at night, thought he had never known so happy a day or seen so admirable a man. It is curious how little it needs to form an ideal and fix the aspiration of a young life.

When he reached the farm-house that night, Eastman found a telegram awaiting him:

"Come by first train to-morrow without fail.

"METZIGER."

It did not give him any anxiety. He did not try to picture what reception he would meet. He was ready. He had thought it out. When? He did not know. What had he concluded? To do whatever he might for man's betterment that God might open the way for him to do. With what instruments? Such as God might place in his hands—provide for his use. And his love—Lilian Kishu? He had given her up. He believed that her happiness demanded it, and his love was too loyal to repine at whatever might increase her joy. He had thought he loved when he only desired her love himself. Now he felt that he loved much better when he had yielded up that desire. He did not know when the conquest had been made. He had not argued with himself, nor undergone the mythical agonies of self-dissection which the rage for morbid anatomy makes the chief ingredient of to-day's fiction; but, like a healthy-minded man as he was, he had been true to his love and true to himself, and put it out of his life because she wished to be free. He felt that he could meet her now without a tremor. It even shocked him a little to find that he was beginning to feel that she was not altogether wrong, that she could never have been quite happy in a life-companionship with him. He was sorry; it was his misfortune; but he was glad she had found it out in time. As for himself, he felt that the path of duty was plain. He would do—whatever opportunity offered. He did not doubt but he would do some good, and he did not think that the face of man would ever terrify him again.

In that very moment he began the task, thus self-imposed, and talked long and earnestly that night with the parents about the future of their son, the boy who had shared his week's sport and who had fallen asleep in weariness with his head upon the knee of his new friend. How light his heart was when he sought his bed under the rafters of the crumbling homestead that night, and sank to sleep with the moonbeams and the music of the murmuring river stealing in at the open window! How simple and how sweet—yet how sure are Nature's medicaments to the worn soul!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GATE OF PALMS.

If the young pastor had spent the night in the most approved paroxysms of self-conscious imagining, he would never have pictured anything like the greeting that awaited him as the train glided into the station, and, with his rod in hand and creel upon his hip, he started along the platform. Metziger and Dr. Farewell; the sister of the dead Merton arm-in-arm with his widow; the genial president of the Belt and Cross-Cut and the surly director; a delegation of the drivers and the wives of a good many more; a great crowd of the members of his church with a devout deacon at their head; many of his brethren in the ministry; prominent citizens from all churches and no churches at all—what were they here for? What did it mean? Hand-shakings, congratulations, cheers, laughter, commendations, smiles, flowers, tears! What could it mean? He turned from one to another in amazement. His evident confusion added to the zest of their greeting. All saw that it was a genuine surprise, and there is nothing a crowd likes so well as the unexpected.

And the news that was poured into his ears as he was passed from one to another, from hand to hand, as it were, in the crowded station! Dr. Farewell gave him assurance that Jonas Underwood was steadily improving; Merton's sister thanked him for his kindness; the drivers cheered for "Number Forty-six;" their wives greeted him with blessings; Murchison assured him that the Belt and Cross-Cut would stand by him; Tabor, that "there couldn't anybody jump on a man who was doing a decent thing in that way while he was around!" And when, finally, Metziger had steered him through the laughing, tearful, shouting crowd to a carriage which was in waiting, old Deacon Goodyear, the saintliest soul that ever worshiped at the Golden Lilies, leaned over and with tears in his eyes whispered in his pastor's ear:

"I do believe we're going to have an—an *awakening*. Never have known such a prayer-meeting since we've been in the new church as we had Thursday night. The lecture-room was full and all seemed to have you in their hearts. You ought to have heard the prayers—seemed as if you must have heard them!"

Thursday night! He knew now, whence his peace had come—the manna that had fallen on his soul while he slept!

The carriage drove away with one of its occupants stunned and speechless with surprise. Metziger was hurriedly explaining what had happened; how the reaction had set in as soon as the truth was known; that Jonas Underwood had insisted on being carried into the prayer-meeting and having a paper, written at his dictation, read to those assembled—the effect was "immense," Metziger said; that the Mertons were so pleased with the pastor's tact in saving the family from disgrace that, finding their brother's widow a really accomplished lady, they had taken her up, their mutual interests had been harmonized, and what seemed destined to prove a scandal to the church was likely to be a blessing; how Searle had planned the welcome, and given notice in the *Breeze* that "a few friends" would meet the pastor of the Golden Lilies at the station on his return.

"We made sure it would not be a failure; but it was about as much of a surprise-party to us as to you. We didn't expect such an ovation as that."

"I don't deserve it," said the disconcerted fisherman.

"Well," answered the other dryly, "you'll have to try and put up with it; it's your own fault; you shouldn't have gone about doing good without blowing a trumpet, if you didn't want people to act silly when they found it out. It can't be helped now."

The lawyer hated shams and would not doff his hat to them. People called him a cynic, and he had as good reason to be such as any one, since he saw into so many rotten hearts. Yet he loved a man, and believed in humanity.

Murvale Eastman was dumb with thankfulness, yet there was one drop of sorrow in his brimming cup of bliss.

Wilton Kishu and his daughter were not among the crowd who came to welcome him. Of course it was not to be expected, and yet it gave his heart a wrench that he should have received such a greeting and Lilian not have been present to share his joy. Mr. Kishu, too—could the Golden Lilies rejoice without him? At length Eastman mentioned his name. Metziger grew grave at once.

"I wouldn't waste a thought on him," was the only comment.

But when the young minister fell on his knees in the silence of his own room, these were the first names that passed his lips.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUT OF THE SMITTEN ROCK.

THE pastor's eyes were dewy the next morning when he rose before such an audience as had never crowded the Church of the Golden Lilies, and with uplifted hand gave the signal for the invocation. He could not join in the words of praise as had been his wont. He was striving to master his emotion. Every seat was occupied and all the aisles were filled with chairs. Some familiar faces were missing. Mr. Kishu, one of the deacons, and several of the leading members were absent. The pastor's heart ached, for he counted them among the sheep given into his care by the Great Shepherd, and he feared lest any act of his might bring peril to any soul or enmity to any heart. He did not think at all of the strife he knew to be impending. He had put that into other hands; but he did not wish needlessly to awaken anger or distrust. Lilian Kishu was the only member of the family in her father's pew. Her eyes sought Murvale Eastman's with wistful inquiry. He thought it very kind of her to come and show that there was no enmity between them; and he thanked her with a glance for her thoughtful friendliness. His heart was very tender toward her, but he did not feel one throb of love or hope; and did not once think of regret. The "woman in black" sat with other mourning women, peaceful and resigned, in the accustomed pew of the Mertons. Many eyes scanned her face, and there were whispered words of resentment that one so evidently pure should have been so defamed.

In a chair at the right of the pulpit was Jonas Underwood; his wife, placid and smiling, sat beside him. His physician had granted him leave to attend the service. If his improvement continued for one more week, he was to go to a milder clime, for Jonas Underwood had become a capitalist since the last Sabbath; the long-deferred pension had been granted. Stirred by the taunts of the press which had taken up his case, the bureau having in charge the distribution of the nation's bounty had declared itself unable to resist the testimony of the fragment of lead he had so long carried in his vitals, and to stop the jeers at its evident injustice had hastily granted the pension with arrears. This haste was due to the clamorous insistence of a member of Congress who had taken a sense of the situation. Underwood had already received the certificate and executed his voucher for the first payment. The hope of seeing his wife in comfort had given him new life. The audience gazed at him with unbounded curiosity; for, the day before, suit had been begun in his name against the city to recover the forfeited bequests of his progenitor. If he could maintain his claim of descent from old Valentine he would be a very rich man. His health, therefore, was a matter of interest to very many people.

In front of the pulpit, sitting bolt upright in a chair in the middle aisle, was Ebenezer Townley, gray-haired and fair-faced, with that sternness of outline which for many generations characterizes the Scotch-descended, the one rich member who had withdrawn when the church had left its old down-town home in order to meet the convenience of the wealthy men who contributed to its support.

He had never been inside the Golden Lilies before, and his advent created a sensation. With his stiff, bristling hair standing out from his high forehead, he faced the pulpit, turning neither to the right nor left, and apparently indifferent to the curious glances cast upon him.

But the most striking thing in the congregation was the number of new, serious faces, faces of men and women who did not represent great wealth or high station, earnest-minded people who had evidently come to hear the new doctrines the preacher was expected to promulgate, or to testify approval of the course he had pursued.

Murvale Eastman's voice trembled as he folded his hands in prayer, trembled with gratitude and fear that he might not fitly discharge the obligations resting upon him.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ!" was the theme on which he spoke. Strangely enough he had little to say about sympathy and benevolence, and less still about the duty to "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and succor the distressed." The words were intended, he thought, to be taken in a literal rather than a figurative sense. They did not enjoin so much the duty of pitying one who was sinking under burdens too great for his strength, or giving him alms and food after he had broken down, as that of lending him aid, strength, support, in order that he might not succumb. The great duty the command was designed to inculcate was that the strong should share with the faltering their surplus of strength and wealth and so prevent collapse, demoralization, hopelessness, despair, crime. The primary reference in the Epistle was to spiritual burdens; but the whole argument was in favor of "the law of Christ"—mutual love and helpfulness—rather than the ceremonial law of rites and forms.

The common duty of man, he declared, was to help his fellow; and the measure of help he was called upon to give was the *surplus* of his strength, knowledge, and wealth —what he could spare without detriment to his own health, comfort, growth, and the duty he owed his own family and dependents. To refuse it was to disobey the divine injunction. This was the personal, the individual side of this behest; the responsibility thrown upon every believer as to his own individual action. The text meant not merely to enjoin moral aid in bearing burdens, but, primarily and equally, material, physical support of overweighted energy.

But there was another side of this divine behest. The language was taken from a pastoral letter, addressed by the Apostle Paul to the Church, as an organized force in society. It laid upon the Church, as a primal duty, the obligation of PREVENTING its own weak ones from falling, not into sin merely, but into feebleness, want, and despair as well. A man broken in mind, body, and estate was worth little to God or man as a force in the world's life, in comparison with the same man, strong, comfortable, undisturbed by the fear of want or the despair of vice. The one had strength to give to his fellows above his own need. The other was a drag upon the spiritual vitality as well as the material stores of others. Worse than that, he was a threat against the peace of the future. The souls springing from such lives are like one born with the white tetter of leprosy, a peril to all who come in contact with them, whether with kind or malevolent purpose. The church which allowed one of its members to fall into want, or wither beneath the brand of dependency, committed a terrible sin. The purpose of the Church as a religious cult was not merely, nor even primarily, to induce men and women to believe certain specific propositions, but to make it easy for them to live according to the behests, to practice the teachings and emulate the example, of our Lord. Belief should come naturally, healthfully, cheerfully, according to each one's character and individuality. Righteous living is not only possible to all, but is the duty of all—believers and unbelievers alike. There are thousands who are doers merely, neither teachers nor expounders, nor conscious believers, but men who love the Saviour of the World with an undying ardor, because he first loved man and taught the lesson of divine love and truth.

The duty of the Church is to incline men to "*do* the will of the Father," naturally, easily, unconsciously even, not only because it is his will, but *because it is sweet and pleasant to do so.* Her duty is not only to show sin and wrong to be perilous to the soul, but to make evil unpopular, unpleasant, loathsome. We have too long taught that sin and pleasure are synonymous. It is not true; or, if it be, it is the fault of the Church. God meant the Church to make the path of duty pleasant, not by mere decoration, but by general environment and universal inheritance. Children should be "born into the kingdom of God" in literal fact, born with such inherited impulses that the path of duty would be as natural to their feet as the brute's instinct to him.

We have been Christians, he said, for nineteen hundred years, almost, and the Christ-spirit should begin to be instinctive. Each Christian parent's child should be a Samuel, answering with glad impulse, "Here am I," to every call of duty, because it deems truth and duty pleasant and sweet.

It *is* instinctive, he declared, and most of the children of Christian homes would become soldiers in God's army without conscious enlistment, if we would permit them to do so. But we teach them self-distrust. We teach them that they cannot be good unless they first believe themselves vile; that they must sin before they can be saved; that they must be black before they can be white. In our very love for the young soul, we make haste to stain its purity. We demand humiliation, deceit, the sense of torture and sacrifice, instead of encouraging the young life to see beauty in truth and find pleasure in duty.

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The greatest part of every life is inherited impulse and general environment. With centuries of Christian parentage, the impulse to "do unto others as you would that they should do to you," should be as easily traceable in every Christian child as the marks of the thoroughbred in a race-horse. Christianity did not supersede nature, only sanctified its laws, and expected the Church to observe the ordinances of God, written in heart and soul, in brain and fiber, as well as those engrossed on tables of stone.

"Ingersoll," said the young pastor, "has mockingly declared that if he had made the world he 'would have made health catching, instead of disease!'

"This is just what God has done. Health is the normal condition. The air is pure; the water clean. Mental, moral, and physical health are inheritable, even more certainly than disease. Health strives with evil; nature fights against foulness. God has put this weapon in the hands of his children to be used. The impulse of uncounted generations of believers is behind every Christian child. Does it mean nothing?

"Then, also, we have the general environment, public sentiment, the popular ideal; what is it? It *should* be pure and sweet. The child should not only be inclined to be truthful, honest, self-sacrificing, brave, helpful, from the first; but should fear to be otherwise lest it might earn the scorn and contempt or, still worse, the pity of others. It is the Church's duty to its members to make the environment year by year better and sweeter, so that the inherited tendency to good may become stronger with each succeeding generation. Evolution is the law of *attribute*, whether it is of species or not. We are what we are to-dav, because our fathers were what they were, in the innumerable yesterdays. The dead hand of an ancestor reaches often across even a century and grips us by the heartstrings. God has consecrated this law to human progress. He expects us to make that dead hand a Christian force, and commands us to spread about the young life an environment—to bless it with surroundings, conditions, influences—that will incline it naturally and easily to speak truly, act justly, and be ready, willing, and anxious to 'bear one another's burdens.'

"But grace! temptation! sin! what of these? Never fear; there will be room enough for grace! Do not be afraid your children will not be tempted! You need not begin to tremble lest sin should disappear. Only make the work of grace easy; the task of the tempter difficult; the way of sin loathsome! This is the duty of the Church to those within its fold, and to all who may be born to those who have felt the water of baptism. A Christian driven to despair by the woes of life is a testimony against the churches—the Christianity, the sincerity of all who profess His word in any city and in any land.

"But there is another duty," added the speaker, wiping away the sweat-drops which intense feeling had brought to his brow, "there is another duty, which the Church as an organic force owes to God and man, beside which that we have been considering, grand as it seems, pales into insignificance—or, to speak more properly, of which it is but a trivial part. While the Church's duty, like a parent's, is first always to its own, it is not bounded by faith or creed; it is to the whole world, to every soul that is, and to every one that is to be.

"In this work, however, the Church is only a contributory force, a co-ordinate agency. In it every man who respects himself or loves another is an ally. Every patriot who loves his country; every philanthropist who wishes well to his fellow; every soldier who fights for the right; every hero who consecrates his life to liberty; every statesman who labors to promote justice; every scientist who studies the laws of health or the nature of disease; every lover who counts himself worthy to kiss a pure woman's lips; every father who hopes for the welfare of his offspring; every man who exults in his manhood, and every woman worthy the crown of womanhood—all these are conscious or unconscious co-laborers with the Church in the noblest work committed to the hand of Man by the Divine.

"The function of civilization, which is the sum of all the forces making for human welfare—the resultant of an infinite system of collaborative energy and beneficence—the ultimate purpose of this marvelous array of forces which the Divine has directed against the ills of humanity, is to compass, as nearly as may be, the perfect spiritual, mental, moral, and physical health of every individual, to equalize opportunity and privilege, and offer a healthful environment and chance of wholesome growth to every human being.

"'Ah,' but you say gaspingly, as your mind grasps the immensity of this work and the grandeur of the result, 'that can never be!'

"O fool, and faint heart! What is impossible with God, and who shall set limits to his power? Does he not work by law a million times where once by miracle? Has he not made man the instrument of his beneficence to man? Was not the Holiest required to take upon himself the form of man? If God's glory was subserved by providing for the spiritual redemption, shall it not also be subserved by promoting the entire betterment of the human race? Is God's power exhausted by the 'plan of salvation?' Is 'regeneration' the only means by which he may touch and uplift humanity? Is the life beyond the grave the only life loved by the One who put man to live on earth? Shall he not use his own laws to make salvation surer? Must the devil have his will of every human soul before God will allow it to taste his grace? I speak not now of salvation, but of earth, and man, and God,—of the succor and beneficence God brings to man on earth, of what he wills the human life to be with respect to other human lives, and of the powers and forces by which he expects us to carry out his will. God's laws, written in nature and stamped on the human soul, are not less sacred than his revealed word—which, indeed, itself came through human hearts as moved by the Divine Spirit.

"And why should it be thought impossible that God through human means should work out human betterment? Shall not the Divine select his own instruments? Is he meaner than the tinker who patches your broken wares? Shall he not shape and sharpen at will the tools he uses? Has he not done so? Is not man better and stronger to-day than ever before? Does not every fact of human history show that God designs him to be better still? O fool, to limit and blaspheme the mercy to which you appeal! If God loveth the human soul enough to provide for its eternal salvation, why should he not love it enough to provide for its elevation, health, and strengthening upon earth? Does God love human degradation? Must the human soul wallow in the mire of vice before he can love or pity it? If he loves even that which is foulest, shall he not love that which is less embruted even better? Such fancies are vain! Because God does mean the elevation of man on earth as well as his ultimate salvation, he has ordained that magnificent array of mutable forces which we call civilization, which he has put into our hands with which to work out better conditions. Science, government, law, literature, art: all these are forces by which he seeks to lift us up, if we will but use them aright.

"Learn to see his plan of growth, as well as his plan of salvation. The Master typified the Kingdom of Heaven by the seed which grows from nothingness in the mire to beauty and strength and usefulness in the upper sunshine.

"But the best, you say, is unattainable. Perfection does not, indeed, attach to the finite; but a limitless realm of improvement lies before us. From the age of stone and bronze, from universal ignorance and weakness and degradation, God has pushed man on and upward. Shall we deny his power and purpose to do other and greater things in the same direction, and by the same forces? He has made human betterment depend always on human purpose and human knowledge. He has acted on human conditions by human forces. The best is indeed unattainable, because human knowledge is incomplete; but a better is always attainable. That the earth is not as pure and sweet as the human mind can conceive that it might be, is only because each one is not willing to do the duty he knows to rest upon him. This does not excuse effort, but makes it all the more incumbent on him that believes.

"Collective obligations are the greatest of human duties, because they touch the welfare, not of one alone, but of millions of human souls. The Christian who claims to do his duty to God and shirks his duty to man is a sad failure. The soul that does not love mankind cannot love God, who 'so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it.' Whatever the mystery of man's eternal salvation may be, it is not left to us to unfold. But human betterment, progress, growth, the development of ameliorating conditions here on earth: these things God has made dependent *entirely* on man's willingness to do good to man. All that *He* does is to coax and scourge man to willingness and activity. And this willingness he has made the touchstone whereby alone the work of his Spirit in each heart may be surely tested.

"Poverty and wealth are the chief sources of vice. The man who has not enough is ever under the glare of temptation. And a full stomach is not always enough; very rarely, indeed: there is a hunger of heart and brain and soul that is even more deadly and dangerous. The man who is shut out from knowledge; to whom domestic comfort is an unattainable luxury; he who is denied equality of right and parity of opportunity, whose utmost effort only saves his loved ones from shame and starvation, that man is ready to hate, and only the mighty power of inherited Christian impulse saves him from being willing to harm those whose superabundance represents healthful sufficiency for thousands. The woman who feels herself and her children ignored, contemned and avoided because the tide of prosperity has not flowed past her door, may save her virtue, may patiently submit, may rear her children to noble lives, but if she does, it is not because her more fortunate sisters have not done all in their power to drive her to despair.

"So, too, he that has gathered with unfaltering greed until he holds the destiny of thousands in his hands may be fair in profession, honest in dealing as the law defines honesty; but he has hardened his heart, shut his eyes to his fellow's welfare, and gone back to Cain's silly plea, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' He *is* his brother's keeper. Every soul is responsible for the good it *might* have done; for the sin resulting from temptation it might have removed; for the justice it might have granted or secured, *and did not!* The public, political, and social duties of every man are of *infinitely greater moment to man, and infinitely more important in the eyes of God, than his personal relations or individual convictions or religious experiences.* We have the word of Christ and his Apostles for that.

"And what is the relation of the Church to these great forces which shape the environment of every life, and must color the background of every soul that shall stand betwixt us and the hither shore of eternity? The Duty of Love is the key-note of Christianity. To do good to all men, to promote the highest welfare of all men, is its distinctive quality as a religious cult. Prayer and praise and creed are all subordinate, are only helps to this great end. To *do* is the active principle of the Christ-message, the Christ-thought; to do good to man, the fulfillment of God's purpose, the ultimate aim of his law and his behest so far as man's conduct is concerned!

"The function of the Church as a human institution, its highest duty, is therefore to stimulate men to *do* God's will; to imitate God's justice; to illustrate God's mercy;

to fulfill God's purpose and screen God's children from temptation and despair! Its function is to be, not the controller, but the mainspring of civilization; to see to it that in government, in business, in society, the underlying impulse is that which is enjoined for the regulation of human life, 'Bear ye one another's burdens.'

"Does our present civilization need this force? Are the economic and social conditions of to-day conducive to the moral, intellectual, and physical well-being of our fellows? Look not merely at the tale of crime and the record of poverty, but go beneath them to the provoking causes, the temptations, the injustice, the despair. Let us not shirk the mighty problem. The more difficult it is, the grander is the duty it enjoins and the more glorious will be its solution. In our land to-day there are thirteen millions of families. Of these one-quarter of a million possess an average of six hundred thousand dollars each; eleven million families average less than one thousand dollars each. Of these latter, how many have only five hundred dollars, only two hundred, only one hundred, *nothing* beyond to-day's bread and to-morrow's expectation? God only knows! No statesman dare inquire! No Christian dare guess!

"Let us admit that these vast accumulations represent no personal wrong, no individual infraction of legal right on the part of the possessor. It is not our duty to assail the rich or excuse the poor. The only inquiry we have to propound, the question every Christian soul in the Republic must help to answer, is this: 'Is a civilization which yields these results a safe one? Is it a civilization pleasing to God and promotive of his will to man? Is it inspired by the Christ-spirit, 'Bear ye one another's burdens'? If not, it is our duty to make it so.

"How shall this be done?

"Here is the problem God has put before us for solution. He has given us his Word, his Spirit, the example of his anointed Christ, the knowledge the ages have stored up for us, and the experience of all hearts that have bled under the infinite woe of unfair conditions, to aid us. *The function of the Church as an element of civilization, is not to prescribe methods, not to devise remedies; that is the function of government, the duty of society. The function of the Church is only to inspire action, to provide impulse, to exalt and purify motive, to incline man to apply the Christ-spirit to collective human relations.* How existing social or political evils may be remedied is a question which we must answer as so many questions touch in human development have already been answered. We have learned in a single life-time how the lightning may be tamed, how the tempest may be defied, how the vapor may be harnessed, and have solved a thousand other problems which God has enabled man to work out for the well-being of humanity. Shall we not also solve this? If the Church but proclaims it to be God's will that it should be done, earnest souls will soon find a way.

"Let us pray that we may learn."

There was something vaguely startling in the position of the young divine, which was all the more striking from the fact that he did not obtrude himself nor propose any nostrum for the cure of social or economic evil. He merely asserted that civilization, as well as Christianity, was of God, and that the Church as an institution, and the Christian as an individual, have each a specific function to perform in relation to civilization which was equally divine, and very probably auxiliary to the duty of promoting the spread of knowledge of a saving faith. The theological expert would have found little that was new in Murvale Eastman's words, except the correlation of these forces and the sturdy insistence that both were equally divine, the one enjoined by the revealed Word, and the other by divinely ordered causes and consequences. Science has taught even the most incredulous of saints, within the life-time of many now living, to admit what was before esteemed blasphemous, not merely as a fact, but as a beautiful and harmonious revelation; so that we read to-day the record of God's work in veritable tables of stones which his hand has traced and his wisdom preserved for our instruction and delight. We have learned to come reverently into the temple of Nature, realizing that the ground whereon we stand is holy, and that every bush is aflame with his presence and power. But we have only just begun to comprehend that, as he has made nature an eternal testimony of his wisdom, so too he has made man a constant witness of his purpose; that if the rocks abound with evidence of his infinite power, so human history is eloquent of his beneficence. We have come to admit the testimony of Nature as to his omnipotence; we are only beginning to admit the testimony of man as to his omniscient justice and mercy.

But the congregation of the Golden Lilies were destined to witness on that eventful Sabbath events so surprising that the sermon would almost have been forgotten by them, but for certain notable results that flowed from it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRESH BLOOD.

Of the surprises which the congregation of the Golden Lilies were to experience that day, the first was that which followed the singing of a hymn after the sermon, when the pastor approached the desk holding several papers in his hand. A hush came over the audience, many of whom very naturally supposed that this was the prelude of division and disaster. Such, indeed, was the apparent purport of the pastor's first remark. He stated that letters of dismissal had been applied for and granted to several members of the church, whom he named. There were not many, though most of them were men of standing and influence. The pastor stated frankly that he supposed the cause of the withdrawal of these members was to be found in the events of the past week. While he regretted that any should have felt called upon to leave, he was grateful that there were so few. The pastor made no further allusion to himself or the events which were uppermost in the minds of his hearers, but simply announced that he had now a more pleasing duty to perform.

The Church of the Golden Lilies, he said, had never known any period of special religious awakening. It had grown in numbers but slowly, and what gain had been made was chiefly by letter. A few had come into it through the Sunday-school, the children of members, mostly young women. So far as the young men were concerned, the church had mainly been recruited by letters from country churches—young men coming to the city and commended to their watch-care by sister churches. The Golden Lilies had been glad to take them by the hand and help them to resist temptation and lead worthy lives. Until within a short time, however, it could not be said that the church had seemed to represent a specific, tangible force in the life by which it was surrounded. Now, however, at the very moment when it seemed least likely because he felt that it was least deserved—upon his part, at least—the Holy Spirit had come upon them, hearts were rejoicing in a new-found love and light, and those which had grown cold were awakened to a new zeal in the service of God. The knowledge of God's truth was not new to the souls who were asking admission to the Church. From their earliest days they had been acquainted with the things of God. They did not need to ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" The inquiry that came from their lips was, "What can I do for the cause of him who gave his life for us? How can I aid in the spread of his Spirit among men?"

The most pleasing duty of his pastorate was to announce that during the past week a large number of applications for membership had been received—more than during any other week in the history of the church in its present location—the greater number of which were on profession of their faith, and he was glad to say that they included all ranks, and classes of society whose lives religion was least apt to touch, those who complacently termed themselves "the highest," and those who were pityingly or contemptuously classed as "the lowest." He believed these applications were in answer to prayer, the yearning, importunate prayer of faithful souls who had long be-sought the Lord for a visible token that their faith was not in vain. The answer had not come, perhaps, as he had expected. Sorrow and humiliation had attended it. Hearts had been wrung with temptation and souls beset with doubt. A week before, he had trembled at the thought of undertaking what seemed a plain duty. To-day he recognized that God had testified his approval, and he felt humbled and contrite before Him that he should have hesitated to follow the leading of the Spirit, the promptings of that inward monitor given by the Divine to every soul for its guidance in the path of duty.

Then he read the names of those asking to be admitted to the church. At first there was a solemn silence. As one well-known name after another was reported sobs began to be heard, and men tried to hide their emotion while women openly wiped away their tears. But when the pastor uttered brokenly the names of Jonas Underwood and Hannah, his wife, a sudden wave of passionate feeling swept over the congregation; the pastor bowed his face upon his hands and Deacon Goodyear, in his thin quavering voice, struck up a hymn, by which for centuries the saints have been accustomed to express their joy over souls redeemed—a hymn rarely before heard in the Church of the Golden Lilies. The choir and congregation took it up with instinctive accord, while the voice of the great organ surged above them, hiding discord and mingling all in one great wave of soulful melody, and the face of the Christ, glorified by the midday sun, looked calmly and approvingly down upon the tearful multitude. Every one knew the relation which the young minister had sustained to Jonas Underwood, and looked upon this as a part of his reward for duty manfully performed. The hymn ceased suddenly, leaving its echoes to die away among the resounding arches, as Dr. Farewell, fearing for his patient's safety, stepped to his side and with the aid of his wife moved back into the study the chair on which Underwood reclined.

In the hush that followed, Mr. Townley was seen to rise, nodding his gray head vigorously toward the pastor, who was striving to master his emotions, and extending toward him a paper which some one sitting near handed up to the pulpit.

Ezekiel Townley had been the *bête noir* of the Church of the Golden Lilies. He was the product of an unbroken line of stalwart believers dating back to the time when the Covenant was first proclaimed among the hills of Scotland. He was a type of that race and faith, the biggest word in whose lexicon is the potent dissyllabe, "Duty;" a man who would go contentedly enough to the stake, if need were, but would not countenance evil nor cease to denounce wrong, in high places or low. Sharp-tongued and unrelenting, he had not only withdrawn from the church, but had said many bitter things about it. The utmost curiosity was therefore aroused to know what his communication might be.

The paper, creased and worn, was the letter of withdrawal he had taken from the church years before, and when it was read, the old man, standing erect in the aisle, said simply:

"I would like to surrender it, sir, and resume my membership, if the church think me worthy."

This was too much for the older members. Deacon Goodyear would no doubt have broken out into song again, but the fear of disturbing Underwood kept him silent. He, with one or two others, crowded about the old man, however, and shook his hand with tears. Mr.

Townley did not weep. He was not one of those whose emotions lie upon the surface, or whose face was an index of what he felt. He only shook the outstretched hands and nodded his gray head vigorously back and forth. The audience witnessed the scene with profound emotion. The few who were compelled to leave stole out with the utmost care, so as not to cause any disturbance.

Still another surprise was in store for the congregation. The pastor sat down, when Mr. Metziger came forward, and, taking his place in front of the pulpit, asked leave to address a few words to the audience. So intense was the surprise, that he had uttered a dozen sentences before the reporters recovered themselves sufficiently to take down his words.

"The twenty-two gentlemen whose names are affixed to this paper," he said, after receiving assent to his request to be allowed to say a word, "have authorized me to speak for them in presenting a somewhat unusual petition to a Christian church. None of us are what is termed religious men, that is, none of us have ever been actively connected with any sect or denomination. Some have been baptized, but have never made any profession of faith, while others, like myself, may perhaps be termed unclassified results of religious divergency. I am one of those of Israelitish descent, who, centuries ago, during the Jewish persecution in Spain, renounced a Judaism they had long perceived to be insufficient and embraced a Christianity they but half approved; who fled thence to the Low Countries in the hope of relief, and afterward came to America, seeking only shelter from religious persecution. Since that time they have been not exactly unbelievers, but rarely found among the recognized supporters of any particular faith or creed. Perhaps they have grown shy of formularies; yet some of them have carried in their very names the evidence of an inherited faith that reaches back, in an unbroken line, to Nazareth.

"I am not authorized to speak of the religious belief of the other signers of this paper, farther than to say that we are each and all of us firm believers in a just God who desires the welfare and uplifting of mankind, who loves truth and equality and hates iniquity, and that we all believe that the principles which Christianity prescribes for the regulation and adjustment of human relations—the rule of love to our fellows, and the obligation to bear one another's burdens—constitute the only true basis of social ethics and should control and govern every relation of human life.

"We cannot justly be said to be disbelievers in *any* Christian doctrine, but some of us would hardly desire to profess a positive belief in some of them—they seem to be as yet beyond our grasp, our specific and positive determination. Whether we shall ever reach a clear conviction of their truth or not we cannot say. I will not conceal from you, also, that we do not desire to discuss these questions, feeling that it would be unprofitable if not absolutely harmful to do so. Some of us, at least, have a very clear impression that there has already been too much controversy in regard to the will of God and the means by which he may or may not accomplish his purpose, and not enough consideration given to man's nature and the means by which we may perform the will of God on earth and discharge the duties toward humanity which we believe he has laid on all, whether those whom the Church recognizes as believers or not. We desire most earnestly to promote the acceptation of the rules: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do to you,' and 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' as the practical and universal rules of human conduct in every relation of life. We desire to do this without any imputation of the standards of faith of the church, or of any individual, and without any profession of acceptance of them unless we shall see fit individually to profess the same and apply for membership.

"While we have the warmest sympathy with the work and mission of the Church, so far as it means the promotion of justice and mercy among mankind and the improvement of human conditions, we do not feel justified in asking to be received as members of a communion, all of whose tenets we could not heartily avow and maintain. At the same time, we believe that Christianity represents an aggregation of forces that make for human melioration to a much greater degree than any other human institution, and has the means to make them more effective in the promotion of human welfare, than any other. We feel, too, that a just and true economy of these forces, wherever they may be found, demands that they be brought into sincere harmony and accord with the Church as an ameliorating influence in life and society.

"With no wish to cause schism or distrust, but with a hearty desire, on the contrary, to avoid it; with no purpose to weaken Christianity, but with a sincere hope that the number of believers may increase; we have come to ask this church if there is not some way by which we, and others of like views and purposes, may actively co-operate with it in the promotion of this phase of its work, without being bound by its other tenets, or expected or required to take a part in their assertion or promulgation.

"We are aware that we might become members of the congregation, and so do something in this direction.

Many of us have long sustained this ill-defined relation to some church organization, and I think all the names on this paper will be recognized as liberal, active, and earnest promoters of public charities, public morals, and all those movements which tend to the relief and elevation of our fellows. Our only request is, whether something cannot be devised which will make the Church a more effective force in this direction, and at the same time enable us to do more good.

"We will make this application to the Church first, because it represents the largest number of professed believers in these principles, and we think the influences making for this practical adoption ought to be concentrated rather than dissipated. We think that societies for the extension of these principles, or for applying them to one particular plan of human relation, while by no means insignificant, are of far less value than if they represented the combined popular opinion of those who really desire such results. We think that this is largely due to the fact that the Church has to commend, inspire, and co-operate with those forces which do not subject themselves entirely to ecclesiastical control.

"With these views we ask this church to consider whether an organization may not be formed in connection with it, and recognized by it, having for its sole purpose the practical extension of the Christian theory of human relation, the Christian idea of *man's duty to man*, without ecclesiastical control. There are few who do not believe that such movements without the co-operation of the Christian Church must fail. There are, we believe, few intelligent Christians who do not bewail the undoubted fact that Christianity has thus far failed to make these ideas of human relation the popular ideal of any nation.

"We have no particular plan or theory to propose; we merely ask this church if they will unite with us in an organization which shall consider how collective public agencies may be directed to the betterment of human conditions, and what opportunities for promoting the individual welfare of those whom we may be able to reach may be from time to time devised and put in operation by these conjoined forces.

"We ask this question respectfully, sincerely, and with the lively hope that it may receive a response which shall result in the advancement of human welfare and redound to the glory of God."

The lawyer spoke with deep feeling and evident sincerity. When he had concluded, a long-drawn sigh, which might have meant approval or relief, swept over the audience, and there was a murmured "Amen," from lips little accustomed to pious ejaculation. During the entire time Mr. Townley had nodded a constant and emphatic approval. When Mr. Metziger had concluded and read the names of the signers of this unusual petition, a young man who was known as one of the most devout and unassuming, as well as most learned and faithful members of the church, rose in the gallery, and after expressing his gratification, said that he thought this a very important and serious matter which should be deliberately and prayerfully considered.

There was, he said, a general feeling throughout the Christian and indeed the civilized world that we stand very near to the birth of great events, the development of new forces. As for himself, he did not fear for Christianity. It was a force which need not fear supersedure. The will of God was in no danger of suffering defeat. Whatever made men and women better, whatever tended to ameliorate human conditions was an adjunct of Christianity. He agreed with the memorialists that a closer union of all such forces was desirable, and he thought that the Church in all its branches should lead, animate and inspire such a union.

He therefore moved that the thanks of this church and congregation be extended to these gentlemen for their earnest and respectful overture, and that a committee of five be appointed by the pastor to meet a like number of the petitioners, the pastor to preside at the joint meeting and consider what might be advisable to do in the premises; and in the mean time he trusted the church would make it a matter of especial prayer, that they might have the divine guidance in their deliberations.

The pastor put this motion, which was briefly but earnestly seconded by one of the deacons—requesting all who favored it to rise. Hardly had the words left his lips when Mr. Townley was on his feet nodding his head in approval as he shot his thumb vehemently upward above his closed fist:

"Up! all up!"

The vote was unanimous, so far as appeared, for no one arose in response to the summons to "all opposed;" and after the committees were appointed and a night designated for the meeting of the church to hear their report, the benediction of peace which ages have sanctified floated over their heads, and the organ pealed out a tender and jubilant dismissal, for the physician had reported that his patient's agitation was only a burst of grateful joy, and not in any degree perilous.

The pastor waited in front of his pulpit to exchange greetings with the members of his congregation. Among those who shook his hand was Lilian Kishu. His face beamed with pleasure as he looked down into her questioning eyes, thanked her for her presence, and expressed the hope that she might not be alone in the family pew again. That was all. There was no furtive glance, no word or tone that told of love that would not be denied. Everything showed that he had accepted the situation. He was no longer her lover. Her heart sank as she realized this fact. Perhaps she did not love him as passionately as she might have wished, but she felt chagrined that he should have accepted her words as a finality.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MODERN MIRACLE.

Jonas Underwood had improved wonderfully during the week he had passed in the pastor's study of the Church of the Golden Lilies. The intention had been to have him removed to a hospital as soon as he was able to endure the fatigue, but circumstances had deferred it from day to day, until it had really become a question when it would be attempted. There was something about his surroundings that seemed to suit the fervid, intense nature of the man so thoroughly that Dr. Farewell hesitated, from day to day, to recommend the course which seemed proper and reasonable. Now that Underwood was able to provide for himself, there seemed no good reason why he should continue to occupy the rooms which, though intended for the personal use of the pastor, actually belonged to the church. The doctor knew that his patient was not strong enough for removal to another climate, though he had let fall some hint of that sort. So, too, it would not do to take him to a hospital, where he would be separated for the greater part of the time from his wife. He would have there the best of care and treatment, but it was more than probable that the wife herself would sink under the separation.

There is something very wonderful in the oneness which grows up between two loving souls in a life-time of unrestricted intercourse. Two people more unlike than Jonas and Hannah Underwood it would be difficult to find. Every one saw that at a glance. She lived for him. Hers was one of those natures that must always be a tender for another, if it is to attain its highest development. If she had only herself to care for she would have done it quietly, contentedly, and without any painful yearning for the unattainable. At the same time she would have enjoyed little happiness. There are natures, especially among women, to whom the joy of self-obliteration, devotion to another's happiness, is so much above all other joys that it often makes amends for many deprivations. Her husband's nature was above her comprehension or, more properly, above her definition. She could not follow him in his thought, yet she understood by a sort of instinct even when he spoke of things entirely beyond her grasp. In her younger days she had loved him with an undoubting faith in his power of achievement. She had never any fear that he would fail to accomplish what he undertook. She was not very ambitious. She had never cared to be rich, except to gratify his desire. Given her husband, a quiet home, and her children, and she would have been content.

When her husband entered the service, she was rather glad than otherwise. She knew, of course, that he would be exposed to danger; but she realized his ecstatic devotion to the idea of right, and thought he would be happier in the performance of a soldier's duty than in any prosperity its avoidance might bring. She recognized the supreme grandeur of the sentiment by which he was inspired, the idea of doing good to humanity, or rather of preventing evil from being done. Hannah Underwood felt these things, when her husband marched away. She did not formulate them, could not have done so had she tried. She only held up her little children for him to kiss; kissed him herself, forcing back her tears; waved her handkerchief to him from the porch; wept quietly when he had gone from her sight, and then thought half-sadly, half-gladly, of the pride and happiness he would feel in performing the duty he had undertaken. Had he fallen she would always have thought of that. When he returned and took up the harder battle of life, she was disturbed because he was not happy; when the daughter disappeared she crept closer to him for sympathy, and when misfortune came and the boy on whom their hopes had begun to center died, she clung closer still lest the shock should destroy that life which was more than life to her. And since that day, while her thoughts had not been all *of* him, they had all been *for* him. She could be parted from him without sorrow if he had work to do, anything to fill his heart and make him happy, but should she have to think that he was separated from her, longing for her, served by other hands, wishing that she would come, the wise physician knew that he would soon have another patient on his hands, whose disease would be more perilous than the lacerated lung which was mending so rapidly in the shadow of the Golden Lilies.

Such is the marvel of love, the mystery of marriage, which to-day moots whether it be not a failure, that goes on generation after generation, welding unlikeness into unity, and working out the infinite problem through the operation of Divine law which brings a vastly better out of an unperfectible worse. Thus love is forever the divine light of progress, and the brightest hope of human betterment. When domestic love sinks into insignificance, becomes a thing for laughter and contempt, the sheet-anchor of civilization is lost and the world must drift backward until it finds new moorings. Love alone can keep the human soul from decay, the human heart from debasement, and society from demoralization. Love makes a man a hero, loving not himself alone but others. Its debasement renders him a brute, and makes him the sire of brutes who delight not merely in the gratification of selfish instincts but in the degradation of their fellows. It is the key of all that is grand in humanity—the one touch of God that casts out fear!

"See here, dominie," said Dr. Farewell, meeting the young pastor upon the street, a few days after his return. "You're just the man I want to see. How about Underwood?"

"He's not worse, I hope?"

"A long way from it; doing splendidly. In fact, I had no idea he could gain so much in so short a time. It's the church, you see."

"The church? You don't mean to say the Golden Lilies is a healing shrine?"

"Not exactly; yet it's about the same in effect. I have never doubted that wonderful cures were effected in the old shrines to which men crowded in the hope and belief that they would be healed; but I never had the chance to witness it before."

"How is that?"

"Have you seen Underwood lately?"

"Only for a few moments once or twice." The minister spoke regretfully.

"Don't reproach yourself," said the physician heartily. "You have had enough to do, and you are doing it well. That is a good deal to say to a man who has undertaken so large a contract. Not only is 'Every one to his trade' a good maxim, but, 'Every one to that part of his trade that he can do best,' is the true economy of social force. Specialists in all professions are the ones who move the world forward, and it is folly to spoil a good specialist to make a fair general practitioner. Now you were cut out for a specialist; one can see that at a glance. You weren't made to go around to just so many sick souls or weak bodies every day, and give just so many drops of spiritual soothing-syrup to each. Mind you, I'm not saying anything against those who can. There are people who always keep their sympathies on tap. All one needs do is to turn the spigot and out runs consolation. Sometimes it's a little stale, and very often frothy; but it does a deal of good nevertheless. Some patients need to be coddled, need to hear the fizz of out-gushing sympathy. You're not the kind of man for such. I don't mean to say that you are any better, or any more earnest than many of these men. The one who merely alleviates is no less truly a benefactor than he who finds the hidden root of disease and suggests a cure."

"And which do you do, doctor?" asked Eastman with a smile. "Do you count yourself a specialist or a general practitioner?"

"Well, I am something of both—or rather something of a specialist and a good deal of a general practitioner. I can give sweetened water—haven't the least objection to doing it. In fact, I believe it one of the most effectual and desirable remedies in the pharmacopœia. I am perfectly willing to sit still, prescribe harmless nothings, and furnish sympathy or apprehension, just as the patient's condition may require. Strange as it may seem, there are patients who would never get well if they did not think themselves incurable. The idea of being the subject of a miracle is amazingly inspiring to some people. At the same time I like to study a hard case, to trace some hidden and mysterious pathway of disease into, and perhaps clean through, the realm of the specialist."

"And how are you treating Underwood?"

"I was talking about you, not about him. He's a curiosity. Have you ever studied him? Ah, yes, I know you have—on a street-car. That was a good piece of work, too. Not many men would dare do it; but it didn't trouble you any. You simply wanted to know something and took the direct way to learn. You're all right if you don't make the common error of the specialist."

"What is that?" asked Eastman earnestly.

"Get into the habit of standing in your own light," answered the physician gravely. "You see, a specialist who is worth anything keeps building up theories. It's his business, you know; and the great danger with such a one is that his theory may get so high and cast so strong a shadow on the facts he is investigating that he won't see them exactly in their true light."

"Well, I've no theories, and don't mean to have."

"Don't say that," replied the physician earnestly. "Theories are the diamonds of truth. Experience crystallizes always into theory, and only when it has done so is the world really enriched by it. The trouble is that some people will never wait for their experience to crystallize;

they are visionaries. Others think their diamonds are the only true ones in the market; they are bigots."

"You are in such a philosophical mood, this morning, doctor, that we are getting a good way from Underwood," laughed the minister.

"On the contrary," said the man of simples with a shrewd look, "I have had him in my eye from the first, and we have been going straight toward him all the while. I was afraid if I asked you to come with me you would put up some excuse of an imperative duty you had set out to perform; and I understand your conscience too well to expect it to give way to solicitation."

"So you wheedled me—played the general practitioner on me, eh?"

"Exactly; I meant to make you come anyhow, don't you see?" The physician spoke with gratified positiveness.

"Well, you need not have been so deep. I was quite willing," was the laughing reply.

"How was I to know that? After I had toled you along about three squares, I was sure you would not back out. I want to talk with you further about Underwood before we reach the church; so if you are in no haste we will walk slowly."

"Only necessity could make me willing to lose a moment of your society, doctor," said Eastman, banteringly.

"Thanks; you are so little given to compliment, that I prize even a forced one very highly. But about Underwood, now, I don't know what to do with him."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Why, of course, he can't stay there in the study—always."

"I suppose not."

"And it would be entirely safe to move him now."

"To a hospital or Florida, you mean?"

"Well, somewhere; he couldn't stand much of a journey yet. But here is the trouble: I really believe the church has actually curative qualities for him."

"How is that?"

"Has it ever occurred to you that the man is a poet, unvoiced, but full-souled? His range of perception and power of self-forgetful exaltation are surprising. There is something stately, Oriental and unique about him, too. You have seen the harsh side of him more than I, perhaps; and I can well imagine that he may not have been so impressive in the mingling of humor and sententiousness that helplessness evoked. But he is a changed man, now."

"He has made application to join the church," said the minister gravely.

"I didn't mean that," rejoined the physician, impatiently. "He had religion enough before, just as much as he has now—I am not sure but more. But it was a different kind. I tell you the man who keeps up the fight against want and doom, year after year, never once losing his grip, nor allowing the loving woman for whom he would give his heart's blood to despair—that man is the best possible exponent of the Christ-spirit. He may never consciously pray, nor ever join in worship, but he *lives* a *Gloria Patri* that makes the pæans of an angel-choir seem weak. That is what this man has been doing for years, fighting fate, not once thinking or caring for himself. He has had no backing, help, or sympathy, simply because he was too brave to ask help and too proud to whine for sympathy."

"Of course."

"This made it hard. It is always harder for a man to carry a load which he thinks is hopeless, especially if he does it alone and has to conceal his trouble. He had neither sympathy nor support from outside until he struck you. Then he was too far gone to realize the extent of it. Now, his coming into the study here and the attendant conditions of his life since have been like a foretaste of heaven to him. The quiet, restful, shaded light, the solemn silence, the removal of the stain upon his honor, the very image of the Christ which he worships with a fervor that would surprise an anchorite—all these took his mind off the past, filled it with new ideas and brought a rest he would never have obtained in any other place. So you see the church is really a healing sanctuary."

"It would seem so, indeed," answered the minister. "Why not let him remain?"

"That's the very thing I wanted to ask about. I don't know whether he will consent, especially if any fault should be found with his doing so. Of course the study is for your occupation, but the church provides it for a special purpose. Now while the church has taken Underwood up and the ladies have made his wife happier by kind attentions than she had been in years, there may be some who might naturally look upon this unusual occupancy of church property as—well—as not exactly the thing, you know."

"I don't think there are many such in the Golden Lilies," was the grave reply.

"Probably not; but if Jonas Underwood got the notion there was one, it is doubtful if anything could keep him in those rooms an hour."

"But it doesn't incommode me a particle. My aunt has just returned to the city, and is clamorous to atone for her suspicions. She insists on opening the old mansion, and I have agreed to transfer my belongings there as soon as she makes some proposed repairs. So I have room enough and to spare."

"But that's not the question. Underwood isn't the man to stay where he is not wanted. Now, what I wondered was, whether it could not be made to seem a sort of favor to you for him to remain."

"It is a great comfort, indeed, to know that he is there! I've no doubt the religious awakening we are now experiencing is in great measure due to his presence—his presence and his words."

"Haven't a doubt of it. And take him away to a hospital or to Hampton Roads, for instance, and I think—well—I think the prayer-meetings would lose a good deal, to say the least. But the trouble is to make him see it. I shall have to rely on you for that; he would suspect me at once. There is Mrs. Merton, her daughter, and Mrs. Underwood," he exclaimed, turning to a passing carriage. "I declare, they look enough alike to represent three generations of the same family. I never expected to see that woman look so happy when you called me to prescribe for Underwood. The other—Mrs. Merton—has taken a great fancy to them. Good woman, though she had a narrow escape; owes a great deal to you and Metziger."

"To me?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"Why, I did nothing."

"Yes, you did. You went to see her the next day after the *Thunderbolt* assailed her."

"What of that?"

"Nothing, only you avouched her honor. I repeat, she owes you a great debt."

"Well, I forgive it."

"Of course, but she will never forget it. That is why she is looking after your protégés."

"You think so?"

"Certainly; what other reason could there be?"

"I'm sure, I don't know. It's kind of her to do it, anyhow."

The two crossed the avenue in front of the church as they spoke. A carriage containing the ladies passed them and the occupants bowed with contented smiles in response to their salutation.

"Dominie," said the doctor looking after them, "I'm coming to be of your notion that it pays to do the square thing. All the happiness in that carriage, and all there is in yonder," nodding toward the study, "is due to one good impulse. If you hadn't taken Underwood's place, and if—and if—and if——! How many things have sprung from it? How long has it been? When will its influence end? Really, I am afraid that in teaching me your ideas of duty to man, you will lead me to embrace your ideas of religion, too."

"God grant it!" said the young minister, huskily, as he stretched out his hand which the other grasped heartily.

They entered the study and found Metziger in consultation with his client. After a moment's scrutiny of his patient's condition, and playfully warning him to beware of the lawyer and his wiles, Dr. Farewell introduced the subject of a change of location.

"I saw that little fling in the *Thunderbolt*," said the lawyer, "and came here at once, expecting to find Underwood crazy to get away, as indeed I did. But he's got over it now, and to show how much more influence a lawyer has than a minister and doctor both, I'll just tell you that the matter is settled. Mr. Underwood would not leave here now, if you both ordered him out. Would you?" turning to his client.

"I shouldn't want to go quite so far as that," said the sick man huskily, "but I won't, by any one else's orders."

"What does this mean?" asked the doctor. "I can understand why I should feel anxious about the matter, but what you have to do with it, I can't see."

"Well, doctor," said the lawyer, rolling his great head good-naturedly from side to side, "you would hardly understand if I were to tell you, and I guess you'll find out about as soon as I could explain."

A meaning smile passed between the lawyer and his client. After a little time Metziger and the doctor passed out, leaving Murvale Eastman with the man of whose evident happiness Providence had so mysteriously made him the instrument.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ALAS, POOR GHOST!"

"I WANT to ask you about a matter of importance to me, and perhaps of some moment to you," said Jonas Underwood, as soon as they were left alone. He spoke with that hesitating reverence of manner with which he had always addressed the young minister, since he had been brought into the study. The revelation that the man who had taken his place as driver and the pastor of the Golden Lilies were one and the same person, seemed to have done much to subdue this brave spirit whom all the woes of life had been unable to dishearten.

"I am quite at your service," said Eastman cheerfully, as he drew a chair to the side of the couch.

"I wish to have a delicate and perhaps difficult inquiry prosecuted, which I do not care to intrust to other hands." The invalid spoke in the peculiar labored manner which indicates bronchial disease, and picked uneasily at the knitted rug of red worsted which was thrown over him, as if to hide some embarrassment.

"I shall be glad to undertake it for you, though I cannot promise anything brilliant in the way of results. I don't think I was cut out for a detective. Wouldn't you better put it in Metziger's hands?"

"It is just because this is not work that a detective can be trusted with that I ask you to help me. It may lead to knowledge that no one—well, no one but you—should possess, or it may lead up to a stone wall which none can overleap. It may lead to mercy which should never be forgotten; to wrong that should not be forgiven, or merely to darkness that cannot be penetrated. At all events, I do not care to intrust it to another. Will you take charge of it? Get such help as you will, but keep it in your own hands. Don't ever let go the reins."

The sick man spoke excitedly and the glare of his great dark eyes made his wheezing tones all the more impressive.

"What is it?" asked the minister cautiously. "I don't like mysteries."

"There is no mystery about it. You see that?" He held out the ring Lilian Kishu had given him as he spoke.

"I had forgotten it," said Eastman flushing. "It ought to be returned to her."

"But she will not take it," said Underwood.

"Why, has she been here?"

"Half a dozen times. She and Mrs. Merton are inseparable, almost. I can't understand it. It seems as if she wanted to make amends for her father's haste—in regard to Mrs. Merton, you know. Indeed, it would almost seem as if her father were willing she should. Metziger says he is using his daughter to draw the plaintiff's teeth, in the libel suit he fears. It does look so. I can't understand Wilton Kishu, anyhow. I used to know him when he was foreman in a printing-office and carried his dinner in a tin bucket. That was before he set up in business as a speculator. I don't think he is a bad man, only just one who took advantage of the chances the law allowed him. But Metziger thinks he's bad: that's one reason I haven't told him of this matter. Then, too, I hadn't any right to do so. It was your secret as well as mine."

"And Miss Lilian's!" suggested Eastman.

"She hasn't anything to do with it. She says she doesn't want the ring—is glad to have the uncanny thing out of her sight. You wouldn't think there could be such difference in it, would you?" he asked, turning the jewel around on his finger. Do you see how it glows and flashes in my hand, and do you remember how dull and expressionless it was on hers?"

His companion did remember, and wondered, not stopping to infer, as Dr. Farewell perhaps would, that it might be caused by a difference in temperature.

"Her father gave it to her," said Eastman musingly, "or at least arranged for it to be bought and given to her by another."

"Who was that?"

"I think I was the half-unconscious instrument of good or evil, whichever it may have been," answered Eastman with a jocose smile. "I paid for the setting and directed the package, at least."

"Ah, then you saw it before it was set?"

"Hardly. The ring had been made. Mr. Kishu took the gem from his pocket and it was fitted to its place in our presence."

"You did not see the under side of it then?"

"I suppose I did. My impression is that it was black —black and shining."

"Yes; and the jeweler?"

"He had evidently been let into the secret before—or some secret. He slipped the stone into place, bent down the clasps, soldered it, or at least held it over a lamp; handed it back to me, and I paid for the mounting."

"And sent it to Miss Lilian?"

"I addressed the parcel to her."

Jonas Underwood had listened to this narrative with breathless attention.

"Where do you suppose he got it?" he asked at length.

"Who—Mr. Kishu? You don't suppose he—he—came by it dishonestly?" stammered Eastman as he gazed into the sick man's blazing eyes.

"I don't know what to think," interrupted Underwood, panting with excitement.

"What difference does it make, anyhow? He probably bought it over a counter as one naturally would."

"Then we must know what counter. There are not many jewelers who could handle that gem and not know its history, not in this country, at least."

"What do you mean?" asked Eastman, beginning to realize that the matter was something more than a sick man's fancy.

"Twenty-three years ago a life vanished, a child-life, and about the child's neck was a bauble containing this gem. It had been a charm in our family for generations."

"It is strange that so valuable a stone should be on the person of a child."

"But it was hidden; only a jeweler's skill could find it. The case was of dull and benten silver, which looked like lead. Indeed, I think it must have been some curious alloy, for it never was bright."

"And you have heard nothing of it since?"

"Not a word of child or trinket. Both disappeared. It was as if the earth had swallowed them up. You have no idea how terrible it was. Five, ten minutes—possibly a quarter of an hour—and a human being had vanished. It was from a house opening on a quiet street. We had just moved there, then. There was no water near, nothing to destroy. The child was one of marked distinctiveness, and had about her neck one of the most remarkable trinkets in the land, and yet not one to attract attention or excite cupidity. I alone of living mortals knew its value. A street-gamin would hardly have picked it up to throw at a sparrow."

"And you could get no trace?"

"Not a hint. It was as if God had taken her out of the world, or some Ginevra chest had closed its smothering lid upon her!"

"Of course—you—you—advertised?"

Murvale Eastman's face flushed as he made this suggestion. He felt as if he must say something and that was all he could think of; but he knew it was almost an insult to the intelligence and paternal love of the man to whom he spoke.

"Advertise!" Underwood repeated. "Our whole life since has been one long search. Advertisements, rewards, detectives—the whole machinery by which civilization protects itself against individuals—have been put in operation to learn the child's fate. I suppose Hannah has walked more than a thousand miles searching for that child, not because we loved it so much more than the others perhaps, but because it was lost. Of course, after a while I knew the child would never be found. She was either dead or forever lost. An infant of two years old is easily hidden. Death comes at a touch, or time blots out memory. But a jewel is indestructible. It represents covetousness, and lives forever. It cannot be hidden either; for every person through whose hands a notable gem passes knows whence it came and whither it goes. So I pinned my hope on the jewel. Hannah gave up the child, so far at least as a mother ever gives up a child that she does not know to be dead; but I clung to the hope that the jewel would lead me to her grave or the throat of her murderer. I advertised, first the trinket and then the jewel, but never the two together. Every year I have sent a description of the stone to every respectable jeweler in United States. There is not one who would not have recognized it as quickly as the Kohinoor."

"And you have never heard of it?"

"Never a hint, until the other day, spurred by a restless anxiety to know about this one, I got a pair of nippers—the doctor brought them to me, dentist's tools rather than jeweler's, but they served my purpose—I wrenched apart the clips so that I could get this out and look at the under side of the stone."

"And you found——"

"There can't be any mistake," said Underwood solemnly.

"And you think the child was stolen for the sake of the jewel?"

"I don't know. The track of the jewel leads back to the child, or more probably to her grave, if it can only be followed. If I were young, I think I could do it; but there's no use of talking of that now. My son might have done it, perhaps, though it's not likely that he would have the incentive. Yet I can't give it up. You are the last hope. Will you try?"

Jonas Underwood's beseeching words would have impelled a more emotional nature to ready promise, but Murvale Eastman was not accustomed to give light pledges or abandon easily those he made. So he inquired cautiously, before yielding to this man's importunity, whose brain might be half-crazed by his long sorrow and absorbed dreaming:

"Why should one value the trinket if it was as dull and unattractive as you say?"

"I could never imagine until lately. It is mentioned in my great-grandfather's will."

"As a jewel?"

"As a keepsake, only. It seems to have had some religious signification, and had been in the family for ages. I don't suppose anybody had known its value for generations. I happened to find how to open it one day—intended to keep the gem for a time of need, and thought the leaden trinket was as good a place to hide it in as any; the more, as it had held it so long. Just then the little one disappeared. I suppose somebody else must have found how to open the case."

"What was the shape of the trinket?"

"It was about two inches long and half or three-quarters an inch wide, shaped like a fish. The stone was on the inside, and showed only when the two halves were sprung apart. It was imbedded in a dark, hard wax, which I melted out and in which I hid it again after I had examined it."

"Why do you think it was regarded as a charm or amulet?"

"My ancestor styles it an 'ichthus,' supposed to have been of Roman origin, and to possess peculiar healing virtues."

"And how do you know this gem is the same one?"

"If you will take it to the light you will find certain letters on the under side yet filled with the black wax which is almost as hard as the stone."

The other examined the gem with curious interest.

"You are right," he said at length. "Christ, the Son of God, is what the inscription means. It is not probable there is such another stone in the country, perhaps in the world. It may date back to the Catacombs."

"What did you say the letters mean?" asked Underwood, earnestly.

"'Christ, the Son of God.'"

"There are but three?"

"No, but——"

"And they are D X V?"

"Yes, Latin letters were frequently, perhaps generally, used in such inscriptions to indicate or rather to hide Greek words. Taken with the form of the trinket, the fish, it is evident this was intended to be a confession of faith which might avouch the bearer to other believers while not betraying him to their enemies. The fish itself was a hieroglyph, meaning the same thing as the letters on the engraved gem."

"I suppose you must be right," said Underwood, dubiously.

"What did you suppose they meant?"

"I thought——no matter."

"Well, what do you wish me to do?"

"I want you to trace that jewel until you find whose hand took it off our baby's neck," exclaimed Underwood, excitedly.

"And then?"

"It will be time enough to answer that question afterward."

"You should put this into Metziger's hands," said the pastor, rising and walking back and forth across the study. "He would be more apt to succeed in it."

"I suppose he would—but—don't you see, it might involve Mr. Kishu?"

"Suppose it did, what then?"

"What then!" repeated the other warmly. "Why, I wouldn't harm one dear to you for all the world."

"But you know, you understand, that Miss Kishu is not—we are no longer engaged?"

"I know her father says so, and people believe him; but I don't. I can see as far into a millstone as the man that picks it, at any rate."

"But I assure you, Mr. Underwood——"

"There, there—don't assure me of anything. You love her just as well as ever, and don't need to tell me. Now, what I want to find out first, is how this came into Mr. Kishu's hands. If innocently, why didn't I hear of it from the jeweler who set the stone in this ring? If not, which I am afraid is the case from the care taken about the setting, why, then, of course I don't suppose he stole it or knows anything about the child, but he must have known it wasn't his, and may have had a special reason for wanting to keep it, and so it may help to reconcile him to your marriage with the daughter. A club is a good thing to have when you're dealing with a stubborn man, and if he didn't steal this gem he certainly did not come by it quite honestly. See?"

"But, Mr. Underwood, I cannot do this, indeed, I cannot, unless you permit me to consult Metziger."

"Oh, do what you have a mind to," he responded wearily, "only don't let go the thread; and remember I don't want to hear anything about it. I don't want to think ill of the man, nor have to recall, when Lilian is your wife, that I did anything to make her heart ache. I believe I am almost as much in love with her as you are, though Hannah likes Mrs. Merton best. That's natural enough. The one is always trying to do something for somebody's happiness, while the other seems to think she does enough by just being pretty and talking sweetly—like a bird as she is. It rests and heals me just to look at her."

"But Mr. Underwood—you must understand——"

"Hush! there they come."

The door opened and Mrs. Underwood, Lilian, and Mrs. Merton entered.

"Clara was tired, so we left her at home and brought Miss Lilian instead," said Mrs. Merton.

She addressed her words to Mr. Underwood but looked at Eastman. Both tone and glance were significant, and her cheeks were aflame as she spoke. It was evident that she had purposely brought the lovers, whom she regarded as wrongfully estranged, together for their especial delight.

Murvale Eastman had put the ring hastily in his pocket, and greeted the ladies not without embarrassment. Lilian seated herself beside Underwood's couch, and her pretty prattle soon brought smiles to the sick man's lips, though the look with which he regarded her was not without a trace of apprehension. "Shall we not have some music?" asked Mrs. Underwood, after a while, glancing meaningly at Mrs. Merton. "Jonas is very fond of the organ, and especially of your playing, Miss Lilian."

The whole by-play was one of those feminine farces evidently planned by two of the participants and quietly submitted to by the third. Its significance flashed on Underwood in an instant, but if Murvale Eastman penetrated the little plot he gave no evidence of the fact.

"But one cannot play the organ alone," said Lilian with suspicious demureness.

"I think Mr. Eastman waited here on purpose to assist you. Perhaps he knew you were coming," said Underwood playfully, with a shrug of his great shoulders, and a flash of his dark eyes upon the minister.

Lilian looked up at him, too, expectantly, half-appealingly.

"If Miss Kishu will permit me," he said cheerfully.

Alas, there was no hidden meaning in his tones, no throb of rapture at the privilege of being alone with her, none of that fervid tenderness which had permeated every syllable when she had last heard him speak in that room, when he said to the then almost silent man upon the couch, proudly, humbly, exultingly, "She is to be my wife!"

Lilian felt a shiver as she rose and followed him to the organ loft.

The concert was not a long one. Lilian soon tired of playing and called Eastman to her side. He came and sat down on a chair a little way off. He did not seem to seek nor yet to avoid her. His manner was friendly, appreciative, pleasant—that was all.

"Murvale," she said at length, in a pleading tone, "you don't know how miserable I am."

"I am very sorry," he answered with honest but unemotional concern. "What is the matter?"

"How can you ask that?" looking up at him under her brows. "Oh, everything—everything!" she added, clasping her fingers together and pulling them away from each other with that queer feminine gesture which seems like tearing cloth, as if it were an unconscious inheritance of ages of attendance on the looms.

"I am—very sorry—I assure you."

"No, you are not!" There were signs of tears now. Lilian Kishu was bound to win back her lover. She was not quite sure she wanted him, but she did want to subdue him, recapture him, have him at her apron-string once more. "No, you are not sorry, else you would do something—something to—to conciliate!"

"Conciliate! Whom should I conciliate?"

"Why, papa, of course. He only needs to be conciliated, asked, invited, urged a little—that is all. He'd be back here in the Golden Lilies at once if you would ask him."

"But you forget, Miss Lilian, that he has published that about me which no honorable man forgets until it is retracted."

"But you know he will never retract—never! You have no idea—how—how immovable he is. I think he would die before he would admit himself to be in the wrong; I do really."

"I am very sorry." This was all he seemed able to say.

"Couldn't you tell him that—that you would forgive him?"

"I have long since forgiven him."

"But I mean—couldn't you——" she was rolling her handkerchief and gloves into an indistinguishable ball—"couldn't you just—just ask him—to—to let things be as they were before?"

She did not look up.

"I have forgiven your father whatever injustice he may have done me. That was my duty, and I did not find it hard; but I cannot ask him to permit me to forget it, to pass it by without apology or retraction on his part. I should not be a man if I did that—not worthy of any one's respect."

"Not—" she stole a shy glance at his face and let her eyes drop quickly to her lap—"not even for—for—my sake, Murvale?"

Then she looked longingly up at him. What did she mean? His heart beat furiously for an instant. Then his lips closed as if they shut down on some errant fancy, and he answered tenderly, but firmly:

"Not even for your sake, Miss Kishu."

"Miss Kishu!" Lilian had played her last card, and lost. She knew it; yet she had never come so near loving Murvale Eastman with heart and soul as at that moment.

"Would we not better return?" she asked.

Without another word he led the way, and she followed, sick at heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

POACHING ON THE DEVIL'S PRESERVES.

Two things went on together at the Church of the Golden Lilies in the weeks that followed, with a harmony that surprised some and irritated others, the religious awakening and the organization of a League of Christian Socialists. That a genuine religious awakening should co-exist with a deliberate and avowed attempt to establish an organization for socialistic reform, seemed to very many altogether inscrutable, and there were not lacking those who denounced both as unquestionably the work of the devil. Who had ever before heard of a church allying itself with Socialism? It was only another name for vice, immorality, murder, anarchy and all sorts of crime, some said; while others declared that "a league of devils and saints might just as well be called Christian, as a league of Socialists."

Many of those who said these things were good people; some of them were ministers, and nearly all were religious, or at least, "favorably disposed toward religion, and liberal patrons of the church and church enterprises." There were men and women who had made immense fortunes out of stock-gambling, out of false reports, out of "cornered" markets, out of necessities of the poor, out of dangerous mines and dependent miners; out of grog-shops and over-crowded tenements, and other even more questionable methods, who could not find words harsh enough to express their horror at the sacrilegious union of those two ideas, Christianity and Socialism. The thought that Christianity should lower its ecstatic gaze from the gates of the New Jerusalem, to consider the condition of those who were striving to get there, and endeavor to make the cities of earth more conducive to the welfare of the Pilgrims who were striving to reach the better land, was a thing of inexpressible horror to some. What would become of business and governments, men asked triumphantly, if Christian principles were to be applied literally to trade and politics? Religion was important in its place, but was never intended to apply to commerce and government.

This view seemed to be the predominant one "on 'Change," in the press, and generally among what are termed "successful" men. And indeed it is not without force, if mere accumulation is the true measure of prosperity and the chief end of man; but it is a most degrading admission for a Christian to make, that the Son of God was sent into the world to introduce a religion so defective in its regulation of human conduct, that the two greatest spheres of human activity have to be exempted from its operation; and that in order to be successful and become able to do good in the world, a man must first be given a considerable leeway in doing wrong. Luther attacked the sale of indulgences, but it is hard to see how a special license to do a particular evil, sold for cash, could be more demoralizing than a plenary one given away for nothing more than a vague hope of charitable bequests upon a death-bed.

Yet, strangely enough, they were not bad men and women, not those who desired license and anarchy and hated law and righteousness, who crowded the aisles of the Golden Lilies, either as Christian worshipers or as seekers for light in regard to the new and strange idea of Christian Socialism.

As to the religious awakening, it aroused not a little curiosity with some and something of disgust with others. The promoter of intermittent energy in all phases of collective action and regarding all matters of public interest, is a peculiar American development. In business, we call him a "boomer;" in politics, a "spell-binder;" and in the church, a "revivalist." There are other names for each of these classes, but these will serve as types. The religious "boomer," is sometimes an evangelist; sometimes a "boy-preacher;" sometimes a man who is supposed to be especially good because he has aforetime been especially bad; sometimes one who makes statements in the pulpit that no sane man would make out of it; sometimes a man who uses language in public which no gentleman would use in private; and sometimes a man who is supposed to know a great deal about God's will and purpose, because he evidently knows little of anything else. The especial function of all such is to manufacture or excite religious energy. They are the dynamos which awaken latent emotional fervor. They are not peculiar to Christianity. Other religions have them under various names. They are entirely legitimate forces, more valuable in some periods of the world's life than at others; apt to be too much relied on by those who think God manifests himself only in miracle rather than by law, and naturally inclined to esteem themselves approved and necessary conduits of grace, if not essential elements of the plan of salvation.

Very many thought the religious awakening in the Church of the Golden Lilies unnatural and anomalous because it lacked apparent cause. The young pastor did not seem to have made or to be making any "special effort." The religious exercises of the church continued as they had always been, neither more nor less frequent and with hardly a change in their character. There were still the weekly lecture and prayer-meeting, and one evening in each week, the lecture-room was crowded with people interested in Christian Socialism. That was all; yet the results were astounding. The number of men, especially of young, intelligent men, who sought admission to the church, was unprecedented in the history of any body of believers in the city. The prayer-meetings abounded in simple, tender, artless expressions of faith in God and love to man. Indeed, it seemed almost as if love for man—the desire to do the Christ-will and emulate the Christ-example—had become the dominant influence in this unexpected revival of religious interest. People came, and wondered why they came; believed and wondered why they had disbelieved—perhaps whether they had disbelieved at all.

Many of the pastor's ministerial brethren watched the quiet, unpretentious work in amazement. Some offered assistance; some counseled a special effort to extend the interest to all the churches; several revivalists of well-attested fame offered their services, some in person and some by letter, accompanied by glowing certificates of success. To all these kindly offers the pastor of the Golden Lilies made one invariable reply. It was the Lord's work, he said, begun in the Lord's way, carried on by agents of his selection, and in a manner which the Master seemed to have especially designated. He did not himself pretend to understand its cause or character. The church and congregation seemed to be working in singular harmony. The meetings were theirs; he himself only acting as their servant. The awakening had begun without conscious design on his part; and he could not assume to direct its course or prescribe its limits. Whenever the church and congregation should desire a change of plan, it would be for them to indicate such wish, and then to prayerfully consider its character. So far as he was concerned, he felt inclined to stand humbly by and let the work go on as God willed.

From this position he could not be moved. He asked no advice, solicited no aid, assumed no control, claimed no credit, and rejected no co-operation. The one thing he insisted upon was that this healthful, undemonstrative work should not be interfered with. Some of his ministerial brethren blamed him; some commended him. Neither praise nor censure seemed to disturb him. His nature was one to which decision is not difficult; and it was easy for him to abide by a decision once made. Having determined upon the character of the subjects he would discuss upon the Sabbaths during the year, he did not vary from the plan he had announced because of this unusual religious interest. There was only a tenderer note in his prayers; more fervent expressions of gratitude, perhaps, but he still confined his discourses to the various phases of man's duty to man; and still the number increased of them that believed.

Step by step, with this religious awakening, had proceeded the organization of the Christian Socialists. They had moved slowly. Nothing had been done in haste or at a venture. There had been many meetings of the joint committee on organization, and weekly reports to the public meetings held in the lecture-room. Murvale Eastman had presided at both, saying little; taking small part in the discussions; only counseling patience, deliberation, charity, and advising always that they should seek less to do all the good that needed to be done, than to be sure to avoid doing harm; cautioning them that the evil growths of centuries cannot be peacefully or entirely remedied in a day, but that each life may do something toward effecting the infinite uplifting all desired.

All propositions relating to name, purpose, plan of organization of the proposed association were openly and freely discussed at these meetings. All sorts of people attended and took part in them. Only one restriction was put upon the expression of opinion—the speaker must be heedful of the feelings of other. Strangers of all creeds and no creeds; ministers of all denominations, publicists and thinkers of all parties, and crowds which even the spacious lecture-room of the Golden Lilies was insufficient to accommodate, gathered to listen and take part in the consideration of the questions involved. Recognizing the gravity of the movement proposed, the joint committee presented the matters to be determined, in orderly succession, and asked their free and calm consideration. The order of procedure was as simple as the town-meeting on which the American Republic is based—a hymn, a prayer, the minutes of the previous meeting, then the discussion. A member of the joint committee stated the questions they had considered, read the recommendation of the committee, giving the reasons for their action, and then five-minute speeches were in order upon this subject and no other. These speeches were always ready. Men who had studied the great questions of to-day's social dynamics in the library were amazed to find how full the common people were of thought and suggestion in regard to them. The advocates of universal remedies for the multifarious ills of humanity were disgusted with these restrictions, which gave no opportunity for unfolding their own pet notions, but the congregation of the Golden Lilies did not seem to be hungry for theories. They were too much in earnest to pay much heed to delusive speculation as to what might have been.

It was soon evident that the intelligent masses were already convinced of two things: first, that the conditions of civilized society are capable of amendment; and second that they ought to be amended through the enlargement of the acknowledged sphere of Christian effort. And because of this belief, they were not to be balked of a resolute endeavor to do something to effect this result. The question they wished to consider was, What could *they* do?

Of course, the first thing to be determined was whether a special organization was necessary and desirable. Strange as it may seem, it was contended, with not a little earnestness, that there was no need for anything of this sort; that such an organization would be perilous to the Church and useless, if not dangerous, to society. Professional politicians opposed it, insisting that the State was enough; the representatives of accumulated power insisted that all progress was due to the fact that every man was entitled to get the better of just as many of his fellows as he was able, and bind them to his service with the chains of necessity; profound political economists declared that unrestricted competition, in doing evil as well as in doing good, was absolutely necessary to the stability of civilization; while others claimed with the utmost vehemence that the only way to improve present conditions was to let them alone.

It took several meetings to determine these matters, and some startling facts were brought out in the discussion, showing how far behind the thought of the common people were the lucubrations of the politicians and scientists who studied existing conditions at long range through books and theories, and with the idea that all knowledge must be sought for in the past.

Then came the question of the relation which such an organization should sustain to the Church. It was upon this that the hardest battle was fought, there being two classes of opponents: those who had no faith in the supernal elements of Christian doctrine, and those who could believe in nothing else. The former protested against being required to admit the divine origin of the sublime rules of human duty which fell from the Master's lips, while the latter stoutly insisted that no organization should be allowed to bear the name "Christian," unless its declared purpose was the salvation of souls, and a belief in the miraculous origin of the Master was made an essential pre-requisite of membership. It was a curious thing to hear men arguing in Christ's name against an organization intended to carry into effect Christ's teachings. The Church was enough, they said; only the Church had the right to use the Master's name; and the Church was intended to save souls, not to regulate human conditions.

It was when this controversy seemed likely to grow too warm, that Murvale Eastman, in adjourning one of these meetings, stated some questions which he desired the next meeting to consider. These questions created a profound excitement. They were:

1. Whether the Church as at present organized and directed, did or could cover the whole ground of Christian work or influence.

2. Whether a man might not, so far as any creed or

confession of faith is concerned, become a member of any church without formally declaring his acceptance of Christ's rule for human conduct, "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you"?

3. Whether, supposing the world were to continue even a thousand years longer, more souls would not be brought to accept Christ as their Redeemer by the application of this rule to all public and personal relations than by any other means; in other words, whether the betterment of human conditions was not only the highest duty of the believer, but the most efficient method of promoting the redemption of mankind?

4. Whether the Church has any right to refuse the sanction of Christ's name, or to decline to co-operate with any organization which actually and earnestly desires to carry into effect Christ's teachings and persuade men to adopt them as the rules of human conduct?

As for himself, he did not hesitate to say that he thought the ethical phase of Christianity was daily becoming more important, and its supernal phases less needful to be urgently considered; both because the elaboration and illustration of the former would lead to the acceptance of the latter, and also because he thought the skepticism and unbelief of to-day depended mainly for their force upon the fact that Christian ethics were accounted of so little moment and of so restricted application by Christian believers.

Some months passed before these questions had been fully decided by the congregation, whose interest in them seemed in the mean time to grow rather than to diminish. Then the League of Christian Socialists was formed, its declaration of purpose and belief completed, and Murvale Eastman accepted its permanent presidency. The organization was simple; its declaration of principles brief. It simply asserted:

"I. That the true function of Christian civilization is to equalize conditions and promote the general welfare of mankind.

"II. That 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' is a principle applying to collective as well as individual relations.

"III. That 'My yoke is easy and my burden light,' was meant to be the key-note of Christian civilization, which should have as its chief object the improvement of individual and collective conditions.

"IV. That the burdens of society, so far as practicable, should be principally borne by the strong, in order that the weak may be strengthened and prevented from growing weaker.

"V. That to prevent pauperization, so far as possible, is the surest method of reducing crime, and the restriction of degrading influences the surest method of curing vice; while the relief of want and the punishment of crime are necessary but subordinate agencies.

"VI. That the duty of promoting the personal welfare of others devolves on every one these obligations: (1) That he shall individually, do as much good and as little harm as may be; (2) That he shall, so far as he may, promote voluntary organized effort to prevent pauperization and weaken the tendency to crime; (3) That the power of the citizen in a Republic, like that of the king in a monarchy, can properly be used only to promote the amelioration of general conditions, and that this can be done only by enlarging and securing the opportunity of the many and limiting and restricting the power of the few.

"VII. That the motto of this League shall be, 'Beneficent ends by lawful means.'

"VIII. That, believing the positive purpose to 'do unto others as you would that they should do to you,' is a far more efficient force in the improvement of human conditions than any restraining power, this League will seek to promote its objects (1) By endeavoring to shape and direct public sentiment; (2) By seeking to obtain desirable legislation; (3) By securing the enforcement of just laws and the modification or repeal of bad ones.

"IX. Believing that the hearty co-operation of all those in our country, who believe or profess to believe these principles, is easily able to secure, in a decade, a betterment of general conditions which has never before been matched in a century, we cordially invite the co-operation of all in the study of the causes of present conditions and the elucidation of means by which such results may be effected."

The mechanism of the League was equally simple. It was divided into three Sections, each under control of a Managing Committee, one member of which was a member of a Supervising Committee, of which the President was *ex officio* chairman.

The work of the First Section was to consider to what extent they might *prevent* the impoverization of members of the League and of the congregation of the Church of the Golden Lilies. This was not intended to supersede organizations for charitable relief, but to consider how the prospects of deserving parties of narrow means might be promoted, or those in danger of falling into dependence, saved from disaster and the loss of self-respect—an organized application of the principle, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

The Second Section was devoted to the consideration of methods by which local public opinion or business methods in the city and State might be modified for the benefit of the weak without detriment to the just rights of the strong; it was especially charged with the harmonization of the rights and interests of employers and employed and the investigation and exposure of enfeebling and degrading business customs and conditions.

The Third Section had in charge the investigation and discussion of legal and legislative methods by which the weak might be protected, the feeble encouraged to grow strong, and the strong restrained from oppressing the weak.

The Managing Committee of the Third Section constituted a joint-committee on membership, with authority to appoint sub-committees. Every person desiring to become a member was required to give age, occupation, address, and to state what sum he was willing to give monthly to promote the objects of the League.

"Well," said Metziger, turning back with some others into the study after the dispersion of the meeting at which the organization was finally completed, and speaking to Murvale Eastman, "What do you think of it, as far as we have gone?".

"I cannot see that it can do any harm, and it may do much good. It largely depends on whether God's time has fully come for the extension of Christian principles to collective as well as individual relations. If it has we shall find the world ripe for some such movement, and if we are wise enough to search out God's methods we shall be able to accomplish much good."

"What effect will it have on ourselves, do you think?" asked in an anxious tone the young man who had first moved that the congregation of the Golden Lilies should consider the proposal of Mr. Metziger.

"I suppose about the first result, Mr. Weldon, will be your discharge from your present position."

"Probably," said the young man, cheerfully, though there was a shade of anxiety in his voice. "But I was not thinking of myself; I can get along: I was thinking of Mr. Eastman."

"Don't be troubled about me," said Eastman, smiling. "You know the Belt and Cross-Cut have promised me a place whenever I need it."

"It's ready for you," said the president of that company, his round face aglow with enthusiasm, which showed through the scanty hair so carefully combed across his crown. "But we'll never get you, sir. If they get tired of you in the Golden Lilies, we'll start an independent church and run it on our own hook."

"No," rejoined the young pastor with decision, "I will never be the cause of schism or controversy in the church. If I am thrust out of my place as the pastor of this church, I will take up whatever work God calls me to, but I will not exercise the functions of a Christian minister, disowned and discredited by my brethren."

"Others have done so," said Metziger, not exactly pleased, as it seemed.

"So might I under other circumstances," answered Eastman, "but I have no theological controversy with my brethren, nor any accusations to formulate against them. I can only say I feel called to undertake this work; I cannot arraign them for not acting with me."

"And if you are disciplined?"

"I will quit the work of the ministry."

"All right," said the lawyer, grasping his hand. "We shall need you in the League, and will give you work enough to do."

"That shall be as God wills," answered the minister, solemnly.

"I think you are right," said Underwood, looking up from his couch, "but I fear you will have a good deal to bear."

"I shall hope to bear it like a man."

The little company parted, Metziger calling out to Weldon:

"Let me know when the axe falls, and I will find a place for you. I suppose we shall want you for our general secretary even before you are free to come."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TAKING NOTE OF TIME.

HALF a hundred clocks were striking the hour of nine when Mr. Kishu entered his office the next morning. The continuing imperfect is used advisedly in this case. Mr. Kishu had a weakness for clocks, and his office was lined with all sorts of horological mechanisms with all kinds of striking devices; and this array of mechanical watchmen on the shores of time were so tricked and tampered with that no two of them exactly agreed as to the message they had to deliver; so that the telling of the hour was always a continuous fact in his office, beginning with the well-imitated barking of a distant fox, taken up by the ordinary wheezing cuckoo contrivance, and carried on for a good quarter of an hour by successive striking enormities, each one serving to intensify the fact, unpleasant enough in itself, of the flight of time. It was a curious notion, but it had served Mr. Kishu's purpose very well. In the days when he had felt it necessary to do something out of the ordinary to attract people to his office, it had occurred to him that there could be devised no cheaper or more effective method of turning attention toward himself and his undertakings, without giving occasion to invidious remark. In this he had proved himself, as usual, a profound student of the ordinary impulses of humanity. Mr. Kishu's clocks told something more than the hour; they told of their owner's harmless eccentricities, and toled into its unique and notable precincts many a stranger who bore always in memory afterward a pleasing recollection of the owner's courteous attentions.

So the clocks greeted the master to whose success in life they had faithfully, but unconsciously, contributed, as he entered somewhat earlier than usual by the side door which opened noiselessly before him as he approached. Mr. Kishu made it a point never to enter his office by the front door. As he understood the art of making others come to him, so also he realized the advantage of knowing in advance just whom he was to encounter.

"Good-morning, Thomas," he said to a man in buttons, who awaited his coming. Thomas was a sort of hybrid footman, janitor, and messenger at Mr. Kishu's office. His duty was to have the office swept and garnished by eight o'clock; to don his livery and be ready for calls or to meet his master at the side door at any moment thereafter; to run of errands during the day; and after business hours, to wind and dust the clocks. For this service he was liberally paid. Mr. Kishu, though by no means liberal with the bulk of his employees, well understood the desirability of having the best personal attendance, and realized that the way to secure it was by paying good wages.

"Good-morning, Thomas," was the greeting in the same even tones which had fallen on the man's ears every morning for twenty years, always meeting with deferential response, for in that time the servant had never once allowed his master to ring the bell and never once broken a clock.

"Anybody in, Thomas?" he inquired as the servant followed him along the narrow passage to his private office, the door of which locked of itself upon the inside.

"Nobody, sir; you're a little early." He cocked his ear toward the striking clocks as he spoke.

"Mr. Lampson?"

"Not yet, sir."

"You delivered my notes?"

"All of them, sir. Mr. Hodnutt said he would be in a little before ten, if convenient to you."

"You saw Lampson at the meeting last night; how was he?"

"A good deal excited, sir; looked as if he'd been pricking himself more'n common."

"Poor fellow! The excitement is too much for him. We shall have to look after him carefully."

"Of course, sir. I followed him after it was over."

"Where did he go?"

"Pretty much everywhere—a-spoutin' poetry to the moon, but bringing up at the same old place."

"On the bank of the river, you mean?"

"Yes, sir; then I steered him home. He was a bit ugly, and he went to work like a nailer though it was past twelve."

"He is a very faithful man, barring his misfortune," said Mr. Kishu, in a tone of tender commiseration.

"That he is, sir," responded the servant heartily.

"Send him in as soon as he comes, and in the mean time you may bring me the *Blowhard*."

The *Blowhard* was Mr. Kishu's familiar term for the rival of the *Thunderbolt*. He never used the word except in the secure privacy of his own office, and rarely to any one but his man Thomas.

"Ah, here it is," he continued, taking it from his desk. This little farce had been repeated every day for years. A seedy reporter who had been discharged from the *Breeze* had once called that paper the *Blowhard* in Mr. Kishu's presence. Mr. Kishu had not smiled at the time, but the next morning when he asked Thomas for the daily *Blowhard* that worthy's mouth had stretched almost from ear to ear; and every morning since, the jest and the grin had been repeated.

The servant, having brushed his master's coat and hat and put them in the wardrobe, now went out and left Mr. Kishu alone in his private office. This office did not belie its name. No one could enter or even glance into it without the owner's consent. The artistically-chased ground-glass which surrounded the upper part was only a duplicate of another, six inches away, and no ray of light was ever erratic enough to penetrate them both; neither could any sound creep through the padded doors. Three russet chairs and a short lounge upholstered in the same way, with the desk and a few curios, constituted the furniture. By standing up the occupant could look out upon the street; but a baffling ground-glass screen hid those within from the scrutiny of the passers-by whose figures were thrown upon it as an ill-adjusted plate in a camera.

The room seemed as open as the day, but in it one was as securely hidden as if in the heart of the Great Pyramid.

Mr. Kishu sat down and opened the damp folds of the *Breeze;* he had already glanced at the columns of the *Thunderbolt.* Strangely enough he began the perusal of the morning journal by scanning the column of advertised "Wants." Under this he found one which brought a look of strange anxiety, almost alarm, one would have said, into his sunken gray eyes, and sent an unusual pallor across the fatty folds of his large, benevolent face. The advertisement which had attracted his attention read:

> WANTED.—As a companion piece: a dull silver ichthus; reversible halves. If cryptogram uninjured, will pay $1,000. Known to have been in the city within thirty years. Full description on application to Alfred Williams, Box 1190.

Mr. Kishu was disturbed. The sweat broke out upon his brow. He read the paragraph over once or twice.

"Who would have supposed there were two? Of course nothing is likely to come of it, but a thousand dollars is a good deal to begin with. I am sure nothing can be made out against me, but I was indiscreet—and then—there is Lampson. I came by it honestly enough—but—I wonder if he ever mistrusted what was in it?"

Mr. Kishu did not utter these words. He was not given to talking to himself; but he looked as if he would have spoken them had he dared to trust even the muffled walls of his private office. Something evidently suggested a new train of thought, and he touched a button which rang an electric bell in the outer office. At the same time the droning cuckoo sounded the first quarter. Mr. Kishu was economical of time and noted the fact. He knew he had a busy day before him and could not afford to waste moments. He was going to begin the campaign against Murvale Eastman and his League of Christian Socialists. He had been preparing for it for months, just waiting until events might show that the time was ripe. The final organization of the League the night before had made farther delay unnecessary.

It was an unusual course for him to take. Hitherto, when any one had stood in his path, Wilton Kishu had either gone around the obstacle or found his way under it, but he had been humiliated in three things in which his pride most centered. The Church of the Golden Lilies, instead of shriveling into nothingness on the withdrawal of his favor, had shown a vitality never before suspected; the stroke aimed at the affections of the pastor seemed to have rebounded against his daughter; and the *Thunderbolt* had not only been compelled to "eat dirt by the handful," in popular phraseology, but had had its fangs drawn for many months at least by a well-founded apprehension of the results of its foolish assault upon a woman not only reputable but rich and influential as well. Mr. Kishu honestly wished he had allowed the young minister to take his own course, but he had been so long the controlling force in the Church of the Golden Lilies, that he never once imagined that he would be unable to control the young pastor, or at least compel him to acknowledge the leadership of the chief parishioner in whatever he might choose to undertake. The fact that he had not succeeded, but that every act of obstruction and disapproval upon his part had apparently added to the pastor's popularity, was especially aggravating to him, and he had consequently decided on aggressive measures to crush the man he could not undermine and the movement which dared to seek popular approval without first securing his patronage and asking his advice.

There was a tap at the door by which the servant had retired. Mr. Kishu turned the handle which disconnected a wire, leaving the bolt free as he responded:

"Come!"

The man whom Stearns had designated as "Goggles," opened the door and advanced to the desk.

"Good-morning, Lampson," said Mr. Kishu in his softest tone.

The other bowed, but did not answer.

Mr. Lampson was known to all the city as Wilton Kishu's private secretary, the most trusted and faithful of familiars. Hardly taller when standing than his employer when seated, his shoulders and chest were fully developed, with a head that showed capacity and intelligence, though the countenance had a furtive, almost haunted, expression and his eyes were nearly concealed by the double glasses which he wore, from which his popular designation of "Goggles" was derived. From his hips down, the body seemed to belong to a different person. The limbs were short and slender, the hips narrow and weak. Upon the street he usually carried a crutch, sometimes a crutch and cane. To the surgical observer his physical history was an open book. At some period of his adolescent life the spine had suffered injury in the lumbar region. Nervous power had been impaired until an inharmonious development resulted. From the hips upward he was a man: from the waist downward hardly more than a child. This arrested development was particularly attested by his feet, which were hardly larger than those of a boy of twelve, and one of them evidently imperfect, as it was lifted from the floor at the rear by a shoe-heel several times as thick as the other. His face bore the marks of that subtle dissipation which the hypodermic injector has made possible to the habitual sufferer. His hands trembled as he approached his employer with a faltering step.

"You've been at it again," said Mr. Kishu in a reproachful tone.

"I couldn't help it," answered the clerk sullenly.

"You know what the consequence will be!"

"It doesn't matter. If a man is on the rack, or is being sawed in two, he is not going to stop to ask what will be the consequence, when he knows that one touch of the thumb will give him ease."

"I've warned you often enough. You know the risk. Of course, if you are to go on in this way, I can't keep you here. I've endangered my own reputation as long as I can for one who exposes himself in that way."

The clerk stood mute, but his dark, sodden face blanched as if with fear, and his shaded eyes looked back to see if the door was closed behind him. In every look and tone he showed the confirmed opium inebriate.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNGRATEFUL PROTÉGÉ.

"I SUPPOSE you got the report of last night's pow-wow?" continued Mr. Kishu after a moment, not without a tinge of anxiety in his tone. His private clerk was one of the most accomplished stenographers in the city, but because of his infirmity, not always reliable.

"I got it all right," answered the clerk sullenly, still looking down at his miniature feet and tracing with the toe of one polished boot the pattern of the carpet.

"There were no—no whimsicalities in it, I hope," said the employer severely.

"I don't know of any."

"Because you know you must be able to swear to every word of it."

"Oh, I can do that."

"And the copies?"

"I sent them off, first mail, one to Mr. Speedwell and another to Dr. Phue; they've got them by this time." He turned his head on one side and listened to the striking of the clocks which gave a clew to the time of day more by their succession than by the announcement made.

"You asked them to call?"

"Dr. Phue at eleven-thirty and Mr. Speedwell at twelve."

"Good; and the Trustees?"

"They will be here at ten. Deacon Hodnutt thought he might drop in a half-hour before."

"I declare, Lampson," said Kishu, "you are invaluable. I don't believe I could get along without you even for a week. And you—*you* couldn't live without *me*, could you, Lampson? Not for any considerable time, that is?"

There was something insidiously threatening in the employer's tone.

"I suppose not," answered the clerk, doggedly, his face blanching with a sort of dumb terror.

"Not very long, Lampson, not *very* long," said Kishu significantly. "That's why there's such a good understanding between us, isn't it? But then you know I'll take care of you, don't you, Lampson? You oughtn't to get on such sprees. I can't always keep watch of you. Have you read the *Breeze* this morning?"

"Had a good deal of time to read the news, haven't I?"

"Poor fellow! You did have a hard night," said Kishu commiseratingly. "Don't you think you could let the stuff alone for a while?"

"What's the use?" asked the clerk angrily. "Isn't that the only bit of comfort I have? Do you think I could work night and day, if I didn't use it?"

"Ah, you think you have to work too hard, do you?"

The clerk did not answer.

"Perhaps you'd like to leave?"

Lampson bit his lip, but made no reply.

"I see you would, and I don't want any man to serve me unwillingly. You'll have to be careful, though. You know you are not to be trusted. When you are under the —the influence, you know you talk, and when you talk you say—well—you say surprising things sometimes—*very* surprising they would be to strangers. Your nerves are unstrung, Lampson. You need rest."

A sardonic smile crept over the clerk's face.

"How would you like a leave of absence, Lampson—leave of absence for six months or a year, with plenty of money, to go where you choose?"

Lampson's eyes sought his employer's face with furtive wistfulness.

"You don't think I mean it," said Kishu in reproachful tones. "Haven't I always promised to do well by you? How would the Bermudas do now, for the winter, with five thousand dollars? Or ten thousand if you want it? I only wish to keep you from spending it foolishly, you know."

"I've only one life to live."

"But you might have children, Lampson."

The dwarf scowled angrily.

"You needn't be offended, Lampson. I've often thought it would be wise. You know you talk about things; and a wife—well, a wife cannot be a witness. Suppose I make it ten thousand now, and ten thousand a year from now, when you marry—with my approval, of course."

The other could not conceal his elation, but made no answer.

"I see you like it. Well, I will fill out a check for ten thousand. There is a boat leaves for Bermuda to-morrow. You will have plenty of chance to have a good time after you get there, but it might be best to keep yourself straight until you are afloat at least."

"Oh, I will—I will," said the man with trembling earnestness.

"Well," said Kishu, opening a drawer and taking out a check-book, "I will send Thomas to engage your stateroom, and he will help you get ready."

The servant entered as he spoke, to inform him of Deacon Hodnutt's arrival.

"Show him in," said Mr. Kishu.

"Good-morning, deacon!" he exclaimed as he looked up while he was blotting the signature with his white, pudgy hands. "Take a seat; I'm just settling with Lampson, you see. He's been with me a long time, but has decided to leave. Wants to see the world, you know. Going to the Bermudas, he tells me. Pretty good-sized check, isn't it?" holding the paper up to Hodnutt. "But he's been with me a long time—a long time. Well, here 'tis, Lampson. I hope you'll have a good time. Send Thomas to me, won't you? Good-by."

He held out his hand and Lampson took it doubtfully, then bowed to the visitor and went out.

"Good man," said Hodnutt, nodding toward the door which closed behind the retreating clerk.

"I shall never find his match," said Kishu, "but he is getting dissatisfied, and just now is a little off his base."

"Is it wise to let him have so much money?"

"Ah, that's all right. He will probably not use a dollar of it. He is only anxious to know he has it, and to-morrow will probably give me back the check and ask me to keep it for him."

"He is not really going to leave then?"

"Yes; I think he had better go on a sea-voyage, but not with anything like that amount of money."

Lampson walked along the passage to his desk in the outer room of the office clutching the check in his hand, and climbed upon the stool he had occupied for twenty years. Throwing up the lid he took a small, needle-pointed instrument from its case, threw off his coat and bared his left arm to the shoulder. It was scarred and pallid. Seeking eagerly for an unscarified spot with that curious notion which leads the victim of the opium habit to suppose it necessary to the full effect of the drug that it should be applied to a fresh place every time, he seized the injector and despite his trembling filled and discharged it with wonderful celerity. The change was almost instantaneous. The bowed, depressed figure became upright; the head was thrown back; the eyes flashed, and hardly had he fastened his sleeve and donned his coat when the light of a fixed purpose shone upon his face.

"Thomas," he exclaimed, turning quickly upon his stool, "I forgot to tell you that Mr. Kishu wants you to run over to Speedwell's and ask him to lunch here at one instead of coming at twelve. You'd better hurry; you know he likes to have things done lively."

"That he does," exclaimed the man; "why didn't you tell me before?"

He did not wait for an answer, but started at once upon his errand.

Lampson swung himself from his stool, and a moment after had boarded a car which took him to the bank on which his check was drawn. Ten minutes afterward he entered an office on the door of which was the modest sign, "Herman Metziger, Attorney."

CHAPTER XXX.

AN ILLIBERAL DEFINITION OF LIBERALITY.

"WELL, deacon," said Kishu, as Lampson closed the door behind him, "I suppose you're not much more inclined to go off with this 'Christian Socialist movement,' as they call it, than I?"

"I don't know about going off," answered the deacon; "but you see—well, I've attended all their meetings, and really—you ought to have been there, Mr. Kishu. I'm sure you would have enjoyed them."

"You mean the socialistic pow-wows?"

"Yes; they are very interesting—and—very improving, too."

"Yes, no doubt," sarcastically. "You seem almost as much carried away with this young upstart as poor old Deacon Goodyear."

Mr. Kishu spoke very excitedly and bitterly, for him at least. He attributed most of his success in life to the fact that he never said anything to give offense; but the occurrences of the past two weeks had been too much for even his equanimity. Irritated not only by what had happened, but by what seemed impending, he had grown reckless in his words and determined to crush those whom he had come to regard as his enemies. He felt something of the impulse which inspired the mocked and blinded Samson, and was almost ready to pull down on his own head as well as theirs, the structure he had so carefully built up.

This feeling had been intensified by the apparent success of the Christian Socialist League, the unexpected popularity of Murvale Eastman, and the nagging insistence of Mrs. Kishu, who could talk of nothing but going abroad to escape the humiliation of their position. Anything more galling to a man of Wilton Kishu's character could hardly be conceived. He did not love himself so much, but the Wilton Kishu whom others esteemed so highly was the object of his unremitting adoration. He worshiped not himself, but his shadow. That others should recognize his situation only added a fresh sting to his agony, so that without any suspicion of her real purpose he had consented that his wife and daughter might sail for Europe at an early day. His wife had accepted this concession with evident delight; his daughter, with quiet indifference. While, therefore, he was planning his campaign of aggression, he knew his family were arranging for flight to avoid witnessing his discomfiture.

No wonder the fact angered him, and despite his confidence in his own success, he could not repress the sense of angry contempt which showed in his words.

Deacon Hodnutt was not a man of quick perceptions, but of a rugged purpose, which had enabled him to acquire an ample fortune. He was especially faithful to his friends. One of the closest of these was Deacon Goodyear, and one of the strongest of his convictions was that this mild-mannered, unfortunate friend was about the best man in the world. So he answered the angry magnate not at all subserviently, but yet with a touch of that accustomed deference which years of leadership almost always inspire. The way was still open for Mr. Kishu to return and take his old place in the Church of the Golden Lilies. He thought of it as he listened to the words of his colleague, and was for a moment intoxicated with the thought of the ovation he would receive from the delighted congregation. Then he put away the vision and determined not to abandon his purpose. He was on the war-path, and he would not rest until the scalps of his enemies hung at his girdle.

In that moment, Wilton Kishu lost the opportunity of his life, stamped himself as a failure even when measured by his own standards. Yet he was not a bad man, only a type of what to-day's tendencies encourage men to become.

"Deacon Goodyear may be old, Mr. Kishu," said Hodnutt, "and of course he *is* poor; everybody knows that: but it doesn't become me or you to speak of him in that way. He's had hard luck, isn't able to pay his debts, and has a large family to support, but there aren't many men in the city who do more good, year in and year out, than he. I'm able to do a hundred times as much; and you, five or six times as much as I, but put us both together, we don't do half as much."

"I endeavor to be as liberal as I can afford," said Kishu, rather stiffly.

"Liberal! You don't know what the word means compared with Goodyear," exclaimed his blunt friend. "I don't say you don't give as large a per cent. of your income—though I don't think it at all likely—but you must remember that what you give is all superfluity, and what he gives he pinches out of his bread and butter and saves out of his clothes. You can hardly remember when he had a new coat, and I don't believe you ever saw him in a street-car."

"Nobody is called upon to deprive himself of reasonable comforts in order to help others."

"Probably not; I don't know as I think he is. I certainly don't do it; but Goodyear does, and you know it. That isn't all he does, either. There's that class of his in the Sabbath-school—more'n fifty of them, all young men—I wouldn't wonder if there was a hundred of them by this time. Six months ago there wasn't one. Did you ever know how he got them together—he and the minister—I don't know which started it? Well, they just took to walking the streets Saturday nights and kind of getting hold of young men that hadn't exactly gone to the bad, but were on the road to the devil, and bringing them around and making them at home in the church. You and I give money, but Goodyear gives his time and sympathy, takes an interest, don't you see, in these young men, gives them his arm when they're in slippery places, and don't let them go down. He don't ever fuss at them nor scold them, nor stuff them with religion. He says that ain't his way. Just make a man want to do right, he says, and there ain't much danger of his going wrong; but try to scare him off from doing wrong, and he's like a boy at a ball game—he ain't going to rest until he sees all that's to be seen, if he has to see it through a knot-hole.

"I tell you the deacon may be poor in this world's goods, but I don't know of anybody that'll have as big a pile of vouchers for good deeds done in Christ's name when he comes to settle up as old Goodyear, unless it's the young minister; if he keeps on in the way he's begun, he ain't likely to be far behind. It don't do for us to talk lightly of such a man as the deacon, Kishu; he hasn't had a new hat in five years to my certain knowledge, but if we ever have the luck to see him in the New Jerusalem, we'll feel as sheepish beside him as a man does sometimes when he dreams of dodging along the street in broad daylight with nothing on but his shirt."

"One would think no one else had ever done anything for the Golden Lilies but Goodyear," said Kishu, testily.

"I didn't say that nor anything like it. I've done something for it, and you've done a good deal—in a way. I don't doubt but we've both got what we call 'religion,' though I sometimes question whether mine's the genuine sort—I do indeed—" the sturdy deacon added as he met the other's reproving glances. "I'm sure I couldn't do what Goodyear does, or the minister, either; but perhaps," he continued humbly, "I'll find something else that I *can* do. I am beginning to see that the minister is right in his notion that in the warfare which Christianity and civilization wage with evil, there is no such thing as putting in a substitute. That's the way you and I did in the war-time, when we were young, and that's the way both of us got our start in life, too. But in this war, as Mr. Eastman says, everybody has got to do his own share of the fighting, and do it himself."

"I am surprised at your being so carried away with that young man's specious words," said Kishu, in conciliatory tones, recognizing the mistake into which he had fallen before. "But do you think he is sound—doctrinally, I mean? Some of the foremost men in our denomination, you know, have taken issue with him, have counseled him and advised him; but he will not listen to them. For myself, I don't think it's right to countenance such things.

I once thought very highly of Eastman, as you know, and looked forward to—well, to a much closer relation with him, but——" Mr. Kishu paused, cast his eyes down upon the table before him, and arched his neck until the fatty rolls fell over his collar upon one side, in the endeavor to impress upon his hearer the importance and delicacy of the statement he was about to make—"well," he added with a sigh, "when he started into forbidden ways I was compelled to—to—remind my daughter of the injunction, 'Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers.'"

"So I've heard, so I've heard," replied Hodnutt with an embarrassed air; "that of course is your own business—yours and your daughter's, that is—but in my opinion you both made a mistake you'll be sorry for."

"Of course, he is a very respectable young man with good prospects, so far as this world's affairs are concerned, but I had to look beyond that, sir, in advising my daughter. I couldn't have her subject herself to humiliation, and her children, if she should have any, to the peril of unbelief. I admit he is an estimable man personally, and by the use of somewhat sensational methods has succeeded in making himself rather popular, but I do not think his doctrine is sound, and—well, really, Mr. Hodnutt, I have never regarded him as a man of special ability—not an eloquent man, I mean; have you?"

"Oh, not at all," was the ready reply. "I often tell people that he is no preacher. That is, he does not stir and thrill people as those who are called great preachers do. He hasn't a bit of what we sometimes call magnetism about him. But he's got something else that the magnetic man rarely has, and that is *sense.* I do think he has more sense that any other man I ever saw, and the most sensible way of applying it, too. He doesn't lose his temper, nor get into a tantrum, nor call people names. To hear him discourse about religion, and things of that sort, is just like sitting down and talking business with a level-headed man; it's all so clear and easy to understand. I don't know about his doctrine—I'm not very well up in such things, you know—but as far as I can see, I must say it suits me as well as any I've heard."

"But Dr. Phue——"

"I wish you would not tell me what he says," interrupted Hodnutt. "It always makes me wicked to hear him preach, and somehow, lately—since our meetings have been going on, I mean," said the good man in a tremulous voice, "I don't like to feel so about any one. I don't doubt Dr. Phue is a good man, at least I hope he is, but he's hard, Mr. Kishu—hard as the nether millstone—harder'n I'd like to think of the Lord being, on the judgment day. Don't tell me what he says. I'm going to stay with Mr. Eastman, no matter what is said."

"He'll be expelled from the Association," said Kishu, sharply.

"Shouldn't wonder, if what I've heard is true, that is."

"What'll you do then?"

"Time enough to decide, when that is done," answered Hodnutt, sorrowfully, "but I expect I shall stand by Mr. Eastman, all the same."

"I declare," exclaimed Kishu, settling back in his chair, and staring at the other with an expression of grieved disapproval on his broad dish-face, "I never saw such infatuation. I suppose a majority of the church will go with you and Goodyear?"

"It's more than likely."

"Of course, anybody can go off and set up an independent church; that's easy enough; but I want it understood that they can't keep on using the Golden Lilies. I shall have something to say about that."

The other made no response.

"You know I gave the ground on which the church is built?"

"Yes."

"You are one of the trustees it was deeded to, I believe?"

"That's my recollection."

"Did you ever notice the provisions of that deed?"

"Don't think I ever did; Mr. Speedwell said it was all right."

"So it was. You know when a man makes a gift, he has a right to name his own conditions?"

The other bowed assentingly.

"Well, one of the conditions of that deed is that the property shall be used exclusively—mind the word—*exclusively*, as a place of worship for a church and congregation in strict accordance with the policy and doctrines of our denomination."

"Well?"

"Well! I should think it was time to say, 'Well!' Don't you see, as quick as it is used for any other purpose, the condition is broken and it comes back to me?"

"Church and all?"

"Of course; the building is part of the realty, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; but you don't mean to say you would go and take the church away from our people?"

"Why not? Do you suppose I am going to have my gift used for a pauper hospital and a lodge-room for anarchists?"

"I wouldn't say that, Mr. Kishu," remonstrated his friend.

"Well, I will say it, and what's more, I'll prove it, too," said Kishu angrily. "I'm going to bring suit against the trustees, the managers of this club of anarchists, and the sick pauper in the study, and put them all out, neck and crop, unless the church is willing to dismiss Eastman, and turn out—the—the—what do you call it?"

"League of Christian Socialists is the corporate name," answered Hodnutt.

"Corporate? I didn't know it was incorporated."

"Yes; and I happen to be one of the incorporators."

"And you expect to use the church?"

"I think Metziger has fixed up the papers giving us the use of the lecture-room. I suppose something of the kind has been done at least."

"And you propose to contest my right to the property?"

"I guess we'll have to."

"See here, Hodnutt," said Kishu after a pause, "you'd better get out of the Socialistic business as fast as you can; it's a bad thing and got a bad name."

"I used to think so, myself; but when you come to put the other name with it, and say Christian Socialists, I don't see any objection to it."

"But there isn't any such thing—there can't be! You might as well talk about peaceful thieves or pious murderers!"

"Well, I've heard of such things," said Hodnutt, coolly.

"I credited you with more sense, Mr. Hodnutt. You must be worth as much as half a million dollars."

"Probably," was the cautious reply.

"Now, don't you see that the object of this thing is to take away from us what we've got, and give it to them that are too lazy to work as we've done?"

"I don't see it that way."

"Why, don't they claim that the object of civilization and Christianity is to equalize conditions—to take away from the rich and give to the poor?"

"That isn't the way I look at it. What I understand is that we are going to try to find out if there is any way to keep a few men from getting more than they need, and helping the rest to get as much as they need, of this world's goods. And that's what I'm in favor of, Brother Kishu, ain't you?"

"No one has a right to take away from another what he has earned."

"You don't mean to say you have *earned* all you've got?"

"I've got it *lawfully*, which is the same thing. It's mine, and nobody has any right to touch a stiver of it."

"That's just the thing; you got it lawfully, and you found it easier to increase it the richer you grew, didn't you?"

"Certainly; it's not much trouble to make a fortune after one has a good foundation; everybody knows that."

"The hard thing is to get a start."

"Of course."

"Well, now, don't you think it would be better if it was just turned around and made easy to get a start and hard to get more than enough?"

"I don't understand you," said Kishu coldly.

"I don't know as I can explain it; but here's my idea. Say you're worth a million—I know you're worth more, but never mind that. Now if there were ten families worth a hundred thousand dollars apiece, instead of one worth a million, don't you think there would be more happiness in the world?"

"I suppose so."

"Or say a hundred families worth ten thousand dollars apiece?"

"Probably."

"I don't know how it may be with you, but I haven't ever been as happy since I passed the limit when my daily labor was an essential element of my family's comfort."

"But how are you going to effect such a change? It can't be done—lawfully, at least."

"Perhaps not. That's what we're going to try and find out. I don't know how, but I've got an idea it'll be something on the plan we used to adopt to make our horses pull even. You know we sometimes had a horse that would insist on getting ahead of his mate. Do you remember how we used to keep him back to his place?"

"I don't know as I do."

"Well, I do; we gave him the short arm of the evener."

"Made him pull the biggest share of the load, you mean?"

"That's it exactly. Now, I've a notion that when this question comes to be solved, it will be by something of that kind—something that'll take part of the load off the weak ones that are tugging hopelessly at life's burden, and put it on the strong ones who are able to do more than provide for themselves."

"And you think that would be just?"

"I don't see why not."

"And you expect me to furnish a church for the dissemination of such doctrines?"

"You did not build the Church of the Golden Lilies, Brother Kishu."

"It's on my land, and the law makes it mine."

"Then the law is wrong," said Hodnutt, positively.

"Well, I'm content to take the law as it is. Perhaps your Christian Socialists will change it."

"They ought to at least."

"They can't do it; and your folks will have to decide whether you'll agree to my terms or be turned out. I think I'd rather like to have a church all by myself, anyhow."

"If the law gives you the building, I suppose you'll get it; but I shall not consent until we've been to the highest court in the land."

"You'll be alone then, for the other trustees are with me. Do you think you'd better risk the expense of a suit?"

"I can stand it; and don't know as I could put the money to any better use."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Kishu in his suavest tones, rising and going with the other to the door. "But you know 'a stubborn man maun gang his gait.' Good-by."

They shook hands, and Hodnutt smiled as he greeted his two fellow-trustees waiting for an audience.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GOD'S ANOINTED PHUE.

"REV. G. A. PHUE."

This was the name upon the card that lay on the desk before Mr. Kishu an hour after Mr. Hodnutt's departure while he listened to the words of the tall, erect figure which sat opposite him clothed in clerical garb, whose voice had something of the quaver of age running through the monotone which is apt to result from long service in the pulpit.

"I should fail in my duty as one who bears the commission of an expounder of God's Word if I neglected to rebuke such astounding heresy. I have long mourned over the doctrinal degeneracy of the Church. We seem to have lost all respect for creeds and confessions of faith. Ministers are silent and laymen sneer at the doctrines of the fathers. No one seems to pay any heed to election and reprobation now. Why, my dear sir, if this thing goes on a little farther we shall have people questioning the doctrine of damnation. Even now, we do not half realize its importance. Infinite and eternal punishment, unremitting and hopeless wofulness—is really one of the most important dogmas of the church. I can almost say that the Church is founded on it. Any one can believe in Christ and heaven. That is easy, sweet, and comfortable; it is no strain on faith, demands no trembling, soul-crushing self-condemnation. Any one can be a good man and follow Christ's example here on earth; that is easy enough, but that is nothing, absolutely nothing, chaff, vanity—worse than nothing!

"He must *believe*, sir, believe that 'the wicked shall be cast into hell,' and that the wicked are those who do *not* believe. He must believe in hell, sir, a real hell, with real fire, exactly like that we have on earth except this—that it will not consume, though it will torture. You have seen asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So the body will lie, not in metaphorical fire but in actual flame—body and soul will be tortured together — each brimful of pain, the soul, sweating in its innermost pores drops of blood and the body suffused with agony—the head tormented with rack-ing pains; eyes starting from their sockets with sights of woe; ears tormented with sullen moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts; heart beating high with fever; limbs cracking like martyrs in the fire; all the veins a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; every nerve a string on which the devil shall play the endless refrain of Hell's unutterable lament.* This is what it means to believe, sir.

"It is a very terrible idea no doubt at first, but when it once gets a grip on the conscience it is very consoling. I do not see how any one could wish to have it otherwise; I'm sure I could not. I don't believe heaven would be heaven to me, if those who did not believe were allowed to come in. I expect to look down over the battlements and rebuke the unbelievers in the fiery lake below—those who have mocked at me and my Master here on earth. That will be one of the joys of the redeemed. I don't expect to feel any pity for them, either. I shall just say to them, 'Why didn't you believe? I warned you—I, G. A. Phue—the Lord's humble and unworthy servant. I cried unto you and you would not hear. You went after strange gods and comfortable beliefs. You tried to climb up to heaven on a ladder of good works. You thought if you did good to others, God would overlook your doubt and unbelief in regard to the mysterious things beyond. I told you it was a vain delusion, but you would not heed.'

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* When these chapters were published serially, some objection was made to the character of Rev. G. A. Phue. These objections were: *First*, that the modern trial for heresy has none of the spirit of persecution about it; *second*, that no one really holds at this time the view of Christianity ascribed to Mr. Phue, at least no one of intelligence, and least of all a minister. The author does not care to discuss either question. Mr. Phue was drawn as a survivor—a type not yet extinct—of which the author has personally known more than one individual. For some of the qualities of this type he even confesses a distinct fondness. He begs to say, however, that the lurid picture of hell, which is put into the mouth of the fervid champion of literalness, has not even the merit of originality, having been taken bodily from the writings of one of the most distinguished living divines. The inquiring reader will find it, and more of the same sort, in *Sermons of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon*, Second Series, No. 17, p. 275.

"That's what I shall say, Brother Kishu. I've been a martyr to the cause of Christ here below. My blessed mother who is looking down from heaven upon us now, consecrated me to the work of God in my earliest moment. Even while yet unborn, she devoted me to the work of proclaiming God's will to men. With a prayerful and trusting heart, she gave me a name that of itself was a vow of sanctification, though the vain and sinful mock at it. As if by divine direction, she put the seal of election on the brow of her unborn babe; inspired by the Holy Ghost I do not doubt, and fearing the worst, she made my father promise that in case of her death the child should be named 'God's Anointed.' As my father's name was Phue, you see, I was, so to speak, born into the Lord's family—designated from birth as one of them that shall be saved—God's Anointed Phue!

"And I have tried to live up to the name, sir. I have kept myself unspotted from the world and have been instant in season and out of season, reproving them that did not believe. But the Church has treated me scandalously, sir. I say it regretfully, but it is nothing more than the truth. Though I have fought the good fight and kept the faith, studying diligently the truth as it was delivered to the saints, I have been mocked and jeered at even by professing Christians. The door of one pulpit after another has been closed in my face, only to be opened to some young whipper-snapper who knows more about the fashions than about Christian doctrine. I have been compelled to enter the mission field, home-mission work, sir, I, who was ordained to the ministry forty years ago, and studied at the feet of our Gamaliels! More than once, indeed, I have been forced to earn my daily bread by the labor of these hands."

The speaker held out a pair of hands which bore unmistakable marks of toil, and gazed piteously at them as he spoke.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Kishu, commiseratingly, "you do not know how your words hurt me. Why did you not come to me?"

"It does not beseem the servant of the Lord to beg his bread," said the old man with pathetic dignity. "I am a laborer in his vineyard, and if he does not send me aid I will work, as Paul did at his calling; but I will not degrade my Master's service by asking alms of any man."

"Dear me," said Mr. Kishu, "I never dreamed of such a thing; you must allow me to relieve your necessities."

"I have been called of God through you," was the solemn reply, "to undertake a new work for the Church, and it is fitting that his servants should reward me in such measure as they may deem proper. Thank God, I have kept myself clean; there is not a blot on my credentials, and I am ready for this new duty the Lord has cast upon me. This young man Eastman has been very kind to me, though he has obtruded himself into a place which, by lack of experience and thorough preparation, he is not well fitted to occupy. But that is not his fault. The Church has come to worship adolescence in these latter days. That is why it is in peril now. I have only the kindest feeling toward the young man, Mr. Kishu; but the safety of the Church is above all earthly ties. If he were my brother, flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone, I would not hesitate, I would ask, implore, nay, I would command the Church, in the name of the Most High, to cast him forth from her borders as an unclean thing—a leper whose tetrous spots threaten every soul that looks upon them."

"You think he is not exactly orthodox, then?"

"Orthodox!" exclaimed the unconscious bigot. "With this in my hand, sir, I would engage to hale the brightest man in any pulpit beyond the fellowship of any orthodox communion."

He took from his hat and flourished the type-written report of the meeting at which the club of Christian Socialists was organized, as he spoke.

"You think there is no doubt about that?"

"Not the least in the world."

"But how, in what respect? My lawyer says he has carefully kept within the landmarks, and has traversed no specific doctrine of the church."

"Not expressly, perhaps; but in spirit, unquestionably. Is he not openly inviting sinners to engage in the Lord's work without purification or redemption, inviting them to put their unholy hands on the Ark of the Covenant? The Lord does not need the help of sinners. When they are penitent and redeemed he permits them to engage in his service. To fling open the doors of church-work to the unredeemed, the mocker and the profligate, is to throw down the walls of Zion and invite the followers of Baal to enter and ravage her borders."

"You intend to bring the matter to the attention of the Association, I presume?"

"At its very next meeting, sir."

"Would it not be better to counsel with some of the members, some of the leading and influential ones?"

"I need no assistance, sir," said the old man with an air of offended dignity. "I am weak and old, and the Church passes by me in scorn; but in the Lord's cause, battling for the safety of Zion and the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints, I am armed in triple mail of proof. I shall assail him point-blank, face to face, myself; I shall show his errors and drive him out of the fold whose salvation he endangers."

"I trust you may, sir," said Mr. Kishu as he handed him a check, which the old man thrust carelessly into his vest-pocket without once glancing at the amount.

"Have no fear; it is an unpleasant duty, but it will be faithfully performed."

The Rev. G. A. Phue—in his young days he had written out the first names in full, and his mother had always called him in her piping, sharp New England voice, "God'sanynted," as if it had been a single word—was a minister without a church, a shepherd without a flock. In fact, he was a shepherd who frightened the lambs and was apt to make even the toughest of the wethers intractable and belligerent. A lean and eager face, pale and deep-lined, with that softness which told that its severity was without hypocrisy or greed, and his zeal only the outcome of a faith which knew no doubt, told the story of his life even better than words could phrase it. His cheeks were cleanly shaven, his high, severe brow with the blue veins showing through the transparent skin, the deep-set, blue eyes, the clean-cut, sharp-pointed nose, thin lips and square chin, told of one to whose soul-life doubt had been a stranger; who being right would never falter, and who starting wrong would never look backward to correct his reckoning, though he should see the breakers of destruction straight ahead. Error was impossible with him because he knew exactly what the Lord's will was in regard to any specific matter. This was not arrogance, but faith. With him to question was to deny; to doubt was not merely to be damned, but to deserve damnation. The rule he applied to others he accepted unhesitatingly for himself.

His frayed linen, shiny coat closely buttoned around his slender form, even the worn, old-fashioned hat upon the desk beside him, told of an asceticism not less exacting and hardly less visionary than that of the searcher for Nirvana. Whence he came, what was his genealogy, by what mysterious evolution that sad, lovely, proud, humbled, blue-blooded, thin skinned, tender-hearted, unpitying religionist turned up on the shores of America and survived until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it would be hard to tell. Yet it is a type not so very rare, and which, with all its faults, we should dislike to class with the dodo as extinct. Even the bigot serves his purpose, often an important one too, in the history of human progress.

He bowed with quiet dignity as he avouched his own faithfulness, and Wilton Kishu knew that he had effectually enlisted the services of this simple-minded zealot whose life had been devoted to the pursuit of theologic error, whose tongue and pen, despite his unpopularity in the pulpit, were still a power in his denomination.

"By the way," continued Dr. Phue, as he smoothed down the thin, white hair which clung about his polished forehead and taking out his glasses adjusted them to his nose, "I suppose there is no doubt about the accuracy of this report of last night's meeting."

"Not the least in the world. Mr. Lampson is one of the most reliable and capable of stenographers."

"I recognize the correctness of the report in the main," said the old man, "but—I may have nodded for a moment—but really I do not recognize a portion of this record. I should not like to go before the Association with anything I could not verify."

"What is it you are in doubt about?"

"I do not know that I am exactly in doubt, but I do not remember this portion of Brother Eastman's address on that occasion. I was present, sir, as it was my duty to be as a watchman in Zion. I must say I was much moved by what he said. For the time, I am not sure I did not wish his views might be correct. But though I listened carefully I did not observe that he made use of these words which your stenographer has put into his mouth:

"'I beg leave to conclude my remarks with an extract from the Russian of Worsoff, that weirdly realistic poet of to-day's woes and to-morrow's possibilities, which he entitles,—

TRUTH.

(BY J. H. T.)

There dwelt a maiden by a stream,
A flowing stream that sang and purled,
Till all the music in the world,
Seemed but a vague and empty dream.

And she was wondrous fair to tell;
For countless subtle threads of thought,
Into her perfect being wrought,
Stole on the senses like a spell.

"It is the stream," the Wise men said,
"Whose music makes the damsel fair;
And curls the ripples of her hair,
And wakes the rhythm of her tread."

"It is the maid," the children said,
"Whose beauty makes the waters purl,
And leap and laugh and dance and whirl,
And ripple in their mossy bed."

"What does it all mean?" asked Kishu wonderingly.

"I don't know as I am exactly ready to answer that question," answered Dr. Phue, cautiously. "It is not perhaps so very important what it means or whether it means anything. It does not seem so very reprehensible in itself. But this is the point: who is Worsoff?"

"Worse off?" asked Kishu.

"The author—the man who wrote those lines."

"I am sure I don't know."

"That is the very thing; neither does anybody else I've been through all the libraries and inquired this morning of every one likely to know, and I am satisfied there is no such man and never has been."

"Well, what of that?"

"What of it? Well, I thought I would see about this Worsoff—what he'd written; it might be worth while, in the controversy before the Association, to know what sort of books the man was reading."

"I see," rejoined Kishu with an interested look upon his face.

"But if there never was any such writer, why then," said the old man, "then it becomes an untruth—a falsehood—don't you see?"

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Kishu, while his little eyes twinkled gleefully. "It gives you a new string to your bow: if you can't convict him of heresy, you catch him for lying! Well, you can count on Lampson. He'll swear to what he has written."

"Then the Lord has delivered the enemy into my hands," said the divine, with an upward glance and a warm flush upon his cheeks.

The look of exultation upon the minister's face was unmistakable. He had engaged in the hunt after evil in the conduct of the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies, and counted everything fair in the warfare against him.

Mr. Kishu realized this at once and said in the most appreciative tones:

"Really, Mr. Phue, your discernment amazes me. Should the pulpit of the Golden Lilies ever again be vacant, as I trust it soon may be, we shall know where to look for a man to fill it with honor."

"I beg your pardon, Brother Kishu," said the other, "but it would not be proper for me to listen to any intimation of that sort under the present circumstances. I will do my duty to the Church, sir, not because it is for my interest, but because it *is* my *duty*."

He took his rusty hat from the table, bowed with grave dignity and departed, thoroughly satisfied with the purity of his purpose and the righteousness of the cause he had espoused. He would have made a splendid Chief Inquisitor—all the better, indeed, that his nature had in it not a single spark of injustice or cruelty. He was fair and honest in purpose, and would have scorned to take what he deemed an undue advantage. Even as he walked along the street, exulting in the triumph that awaited him, it occurred to him that in justice he ought to give the young minister warning of the bolt that was so soon to be launched against him, and he set out at once in quest of his proposed victim.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ULTRA VIRES.

"I SHOULD say you would be able to recover the church under the terms of the deed, Mr. Kishu; whether it is wise for you to attempt it or not is for you to determine. You understand of course, that it would—well—raise a storm?"

"Among the 'Socialists,' you mean?"

"I should hardly like to define the limits of disapproval."

"But you don't think any sensible people will take up this craze, Mr. Speedwell?"

"Why, a great many sensible people have already taken it up; there's no denying that."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Well, there's the young minister in the first place—one of the most eminently sensible men I ever knew. Not a bit of nonsense about him; doesn't pretend to know what ought to be done, but is sure something—probably a good many things—ought to be attempted and that the Church should consolidate, unify, and stimulate the forces that make for human betterment. That's the strength of his position. You cannot attack or denounce him. If he proposed a specific remedy, one could pick flaws in it, don't you see? But there is no denying the evils which so many of our people suffer and every man knows to exist. He only insists that the Church, which represents the religious force in society, should stimulate the social, economic, and political forces to devise and adopt measures that will steadily counteract these evils, and should itself lead, inspire, and promulgate thought upon this subject. It is a tremendously strong position, Mr. Kishu. One may antagonize the doctrine of a single-tax or of 'nationalism,' as it is called, as a remedy for these things, on the ground that they are impracticable, absurd, and all that, you know. But you can't say it is absurd to try and keep on trying to find remedies for admitted evils; and if the Church takes the position that it is her duty to aid in such works without seeking to make them tributary to her own special interests, it will greatly strengthen both the Church and the movement."

"You seem to have a most exalted idea of this young man. One would think you considered him a sort of modern Luther," said Kishu, irritably.

"Not at all; he don't like to fight and has no stomach for controversy. He is much more like Wesley, who, though not so belligerent, was a much abler strategist as well as a better tactician than Luther. The spread of Luther's ideas, humanly speaking, was mainly due to the political conditions of his time. He antagonized irreparably the body whose evils he sought to correct. Wesley, with a finer skill and wiser forecast, took from the organization whose inefficiency he perceived an element she could neither benefit nor utilize, and not only created out of that waste material a greater religious force than the parent body, but did it without bloodshed, persecution, discrediting the source from which they came, or making reconciliation impossible. He was a religious diplomatist of the finest quality as well as a reformer of the most undoubted sincerity. The two qualities are seldom united. The reformer generally sits down and howls about something that is out of gear, and the diplomatist usually employs his faculty of swaying men for his own advantage rather than for the common welfare. It is only a man who is willing to forget himself for the sake of an idea—to consider the common good rather than his own interests—who becomes a successful reformer. Wesley had the sagacity to know that if his ideas were to permanently benefit mankind, he must devise a specific mechanism especially adapted to perpetuate and apply them. He knew, too, that this must be of a character not likely to be imitated or adopted by the parent body, though not be seriously distinguished from it in doctrine. It was not the *teachings* of the English Church he reprobated, but its practices; not doctrines, but methods. The result was well named: Methodism. He was the inventor not of a new faith, but of a new religious method, which was well adapted to its time."

"You think this young man, Eastman, will be a second Wesley, then?"

"Not at all. Nature never duplicates her products, however persistently she may adhere to types. And by as much as Wesley differed from Luther, or Calvin from Savonarola, by just so much will the man who stirs modern Christianity to new duties and greater efficacy differ from Wesley. He will be like him in one thing, however; he will not seek to destroy, but to build up. He will not seek to change the Church's object or supplant its doctrines. He may not even seek to modify its methods. He will simply step beyond the Church and devise new machinery which will work in harmony with it, supplementary or perhaps complementary of it, in improving human conditions and promoting the extension and evolution of the Christian idea, the assertion of the fundamental principle of Christianity as a force in human life. Whether Eastman will do this or not it is too soon to say. It is a dizzy thing to expect. It will be done before long, there is no doubt about that; and it will be a man of this very type who will do it—bold, but not aggressive, suggestive rather than inventive, pliable and persistent rather than combative. His power will lie not so much in original investigation as in the utilization of other men's ideas. He will be a mechanical inventor rather than a philosophical investigator."

"You seem very confident about the matter."

"It is a matter in regard to which one well may be confident. What has been the intellectual training of the past century? Methodical purely—the adaptation of means to ends—the perfection of measures by which results may be accomplished. In mechanics, in government, in science, the constant inquiry has been, 'How may specific results be obtained?' Invention, adaptability of means to ends, has become almost an instinct with us.

"Now we know that certain specific evils exist and are growing daily more onerous and oppressive, and we know this tendency toward remedial measures has been cultivated until every boy is an inventor. We know, too, that the Church represents a great mass of moral sentiment and desire for human welfare which has been separated by certain tendencies from another mass of sentiment equally desirous of improving human conditions, but not seeking them by the same methods, nor affected by the same ultimate considerations. The unification, welding, consolidation of these forces is the most important need of humanity to-day, and it is safe to say that a way to do it will soon be discovered. It is merely an invention that one can predict, because the conditions for it are evidently ripe. It is possible and it is necessary. The man who finds it will be the greatest inventor of the age; he will also be the greatest reformer: yet it is quite possible that he will not be recognized as either for some generations, at least, since what he will accomplish will be only a harmonization of existing forces. He will furnish a solvent which will combine and utilize elements hitherto hostile and incongruous."

"And you expect Eastman to do this?"

"Well, he hasn't made many mistakes thus far. He has united more antipathetic forces than any man I have ever known, with less apparent effort. Look at Metziger and Searle and Townley—to say nothing of the others—sitting cheek by jowl together—each having his own notions, and being as flint and steel to each other, but submitting to this young man's guidance, though he doesn't seem to have any idea of his own, except that something should be done, and that the only way to do it is to attempt only what they can all pull together to accomplish. If you think of it, you will see that is exactly the position Washington occupied in the movement for the independence of the colonies, which was really not half so important a matter as the overthrow of feudalism, hereditary privilege, which has been deemed only an incident of it. He originated little, and the most of what he did originate was of little value; but he had some rare power of repressing antagonisms and making the most hostile elements work harmoniously together to advance a common end."

"I had no idea you had such philosophic views. I shall expect to see you turn reformer or philanthropist yet!" sneered Kishu.

"You will be disappointed, then," said the lawyer with a quiet smile. "I study humanity for my *own* advantage, not for the benefit of the race. I live solely on others and study my prey that I may not fail to take it. I have no malice against others, but I love myself better than anybody else!"

"You would take a fee against me just as soon as for me, I suppose?"

"Well, that depends; you are an old client."

"But you would not care whether I won or lost?"

"I care a great deal whether *I* win or lose."

"But for myself I mean."

"Oh, you must look out for that. I will tell you the probability and you must decide whether you will take the chances or not."

"And in this case?"

"I think you are likely to win the church, and wish the devil would take it off your hands the next minute."

"You haven't joined the Christian Socialists, have you?" asked Kishu with an uneasy laugh.

"Not yet," said the well-dressed lawyer, flecking from his sleeve a speck of dust with the glove he held in his hand; "not yet, sir; being your counsel, I thought it would not be advisable. As soon as your case is over, I shall, however."

"You will!"

"Nothing less."

"What object can you have in doing so?"

"Did you ever know me to be on the losing side—politically, I mean—or late in getting on the winning one?"

"I don't know that I ever did."

"Just so; I don't remember that I ever saw myself in that predicament either."

"And you think——"

"I think if you are going on with this suit I had better go and make out the papers."

"Of course I am going on with it."

"Very well; the writs shall be served before night. Good-day."

The sleek, self-seeking lawyer bowed himself out with a smile. Mr. Kishu was not altogether satisfied with the result of the day's calls.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BEHOLD A PERFECT AND AN UPRIGHT MAN!

WILTON KISHU felt depressed and despondent after the departure of his attorney. He knew Richard Speedwell for a hard, selfish, "practical" man of the world, who did not profess to be anything else. He regarded other men as a wolf regards a lamb, not malevolently—a wolf has no malevolence against the innocent he destroys—but simply as his natural prey. He was of course a civilized wolf; he did not worry or mangle those whom he preyed upon, nor frighten the rest of the flock. Sometimes he hunted on his own account and sometimes he helped other wolves to secure their prey. He did it openly and without any pretense of regard for the feelings of the lambs. He did only what the law allows. In a legal sense he was scrupulously honest. He paid every man what he owed on the day it was due and exacted a like promptitude for himself and his clients. He "banked" on his promptness and unrelenting severity. He represented always his own clients, not another's. If the debtor was ruined from lack of a little delay, it was not *his* fault.

If the law chose to make another pauper, it was not his business. He was willing to shield crime or conceal fraud as long as fraud or crime were able and willing to pay; beyond that point he never went. He did nothing from sympathy or affection, and did not pretend to. He was a "practical" man, who "toiled not, neither did he spin;" but took advantage of the law's opportunities, as he had a "right" to do. He was scrupulously faithful to a client as long as he remained his client; after that he had no use for him, and he terminated that relation whenever he thought it to his own interest to do so. Of course, he never withdrew from a client's service *pendente lite,* for he was a very high-toned practitioner; but he never undertook the cause of one predestined to defeat nor felt it any part of his duty to soften disaster to one who suffered undeservedly.

Mr. Speedwell had been Wilton Kishu's attorney for many years, ever since the days of his prosperity began; indeed, Mr. Kishu counted it an evidence of his own sagacity that he had been one of the first to recognize and appreciate the merits of the young and rising attorney. It is true, he had not much need for his aid so far as litigation was concerned. He always avoided that; but he had relied upon the lawyer's advice in order to avoid it, and had never undertaken any risk which Speedwell had advised him was "hazardous or extra-hazardous," as insurance men phrase it.

The two great pillars of his fortune had rested on his attorney's advice. He had bought out a partner who was weak and self-indulgent, but whose brilliant qualities had contributed, even more than Kishu's solid ones, to the building up the business of the partnership; indeed, it could not have been established without him. But, once established, the more thrifty partner not only bewailed his associate's weakness, but threatened his remissness. Once, after a deep debauch, amid the gloom and despondency resulting therefrom, the partner had offered to sell out. He did not know the value of what he proposed to dispose of as well as Mr. Kishu; but the latter warily depressed him still more by dwelling on its contingencies and liabilities. The result was—it is not pleasant to tell, but it was lawful, and the best man cannot help his advantage from another's weakness. Mr. Kishu's partner was not drunk when he signed the contract of sale; there were plenty of witnesses to that. Mr. Speedwell, who drew the papers, declared that he had never seen a more completely sober man in his life. It was true, too, but not the whole truth. The brain, the soul, had not yet recovered from the effects of the debauch; the man was not in a normal condition. His brain was diseased; he was not then capable of appreciating values or estimating prospects.

No matter; before the sun went down Mr. Kishu was the owner; the former partner an employé. A few months afterward he died in a debauch—"died in his sins," Mr. Kishu declared with solemn horror. He was very kind to the bereft and impoverished family, and was highly commended by all good people for his charity and by all knowing ones for his sagacity. Mr. Speedwell had assured him that the transaction was "perfectly legal," and his opinion proved correct. This was Mr. Kishu's first great venture.

The next one was made also on his attorney's advice; but in this case the lawyer's opinion had not been so positive.

"It is *possible* that there may be an heir and *possible* that he may not be estopped. The question is not clear of doubt and has never been decided; but if an heir should appear, he will probably be poor; no capitalist would be likely to back him, and I think you are perfectly safe in the course you propose. The legal and natural chances are overwhelmingly in favor of this view." Wilton Kishu had acted on this opinion; had bought the "Flat-iron Tract," and secured options on other property in that vicinity. By the rapid enhancement of values in the neighborhood, he had become one of the very rich men of the city.

The former of these transactions had troubled Mr. Kishu a good deal; the attorney had never been quite clear about the latter. Some curious feeling of doing restitution for the former, had influenced Mr. Kishu when he filled out the strangely liberal check for his stenographer that morning. He could not understand it himself. The partner's name had not been Lampson. Why should he make restitution to another? He began already to regret it.

In like manner it seemed that the lawyer's consciousness was pricked with apprehension that day, and he went out of his usual course to make suggestions to a client after having received positive instructions from him. So when Mr. Kishu rang his bell to inquire for his secretary, Thomas brought a note from Mr. Speedwell.

"Where is Mr. Lampson, Thomas?"

"I've not seen him since early this morning, sir. It's likely he's off on a spree all by himself, if you haven't sent him out. He was usin' his squirter lively after he come out of here; that I did see, sir," replied the lackey.

"Indeed! Call the president of the Commonwealth on the telephone, and let me know when you get him."

"All right, sir."

Mr. Kishu opened the note his man had handed him and read:

"I do not know as you remember the fact that this man Underwood claims to be an heir of old Xim Valentine. Perhaps that may make a difference in the matter we spoke of this morning. Yours, R. S."

Though a cautious man, Mr. Kishu was a stubborn one. He thought change an indication of weakness, and was more than anything else afraid that people might think him weak. This is the fallacy of most stubborn men—indeed, it marks the line between firmness and stubbornness. He had long since ceased to fear old Valentine's heirs, first, because of the audacity long immunity brings, and, secondly, because of the lawyer's very clear statement of the infinitesimal chances against him, in the opinion rendered years before. He did not know that the lawyer would never have stood upon the chances, knowing as the profession does how frail a dependence is mere probability, and that all these years he had been doubting as to the law. So Kishu wrote underneath the lawyer's inquiry in the fine, clear characters his chubby hand was accustomed to shape:

"I had not overlooked the fact. Go ahead," signed his name, placed the note in another envelope, and directed it to the lawyer.

It seemed a fine, brave thing to do, and he congratulated himself upon his courage. Richard Speedwell might think the world was going to change and the time at hand when men and women would not consider money the true measure of success. He might believe that Christian Socialism would prevail; but Wilton Kishu did not. He knew what chance a beggar had against a millionaire in a court. Even if his cause was just, he knew that justice is a costly article to buy in the market overt of an American court, though honestly dispensed, and given "without money and without price." Lawyers cost money, delays are purchasable, and the poor man who fights the rich must have need of a forbearing stomach and unusual expectancy of life. Justice under our system presupposes in the poor when matched against the rich, the power to outlive delay and conquer both genius and corruption. Mr. Kishu's faith was not, therefore, without reasonable foundation.

"I've got the Commonwealth, sir," said Thomas at the door of the private office.

"Very well. Take this to Mr. Speedwell."

The man bowed as he took the letter while his employer sauntered over to the telephone in the outer office.

"Hello!" he called, adjusting the instrument to his ear.

There came a rattling, crackling squeak in reply.

"Who is this?"

Another crackling splutter.

"Has Lampson been at the bank to-day?"

There was a moment's delay, then the little explosive squeak came again.

"For how much?"

Another delay.

"Did he cash it?"

"What?"

"Got it certified, eh?"

More squeaks.

"So you've paid it to the West End National?"

There was another crackling minification of human speech.

"Oh, no," said Kishu speaking unblushingly to the unseeing transmitter; "nothing wrong, only if Lampson had not cashed it, I would have made a bigger draft on you to-day. I hardly expected it would get around so soon."

"What?"

"Thank you; it is only a matter of drawing two checks instead of one. I'll have time to get them certified, I guess. Good-by."

The clocks were beginning to strike the hour of three as he hung up the instrument; yet he appeared in no haste, but sauntered carelessly toward the door. It seemed a curious thing to be alone here in his sumptuous office at this time of day. He knew that just beyond the wall were a score of clerks at work upon his business; but they never approached him unless sent for or brought to him by Lampson, who was his universal intermediary. Where was Lampson? Had his dependent at length broken away and defied him? Mr. Kishu smiled at the thought. He did not fear his secretary. Why should he? He had never done any wrong, not a single unlawful act—or only one, at least, and of that his secretary knew nothing. He could defy the closest scrutiny; his skirts were clean. Yet he looked troubled.

"*Sun—Evening Sun?*" asked a persistent newsboy as he strolled by the plate-glass door. "Ten thousand dollars reward!"

"Ten thousand dollars reward"—the very sum he had lost. The *Evening Sun* was a sort of supplemental edition of the *Morning Breeze*, and the magnate of the *Thunderbolt* had as little use for it; but he opened the door, dropped a penny into the boy's grimy hand, and received the damp, clammy sheet, the very smell of which somehow reminded him of the dead, as he carried it into his private room.

There it was, sure enough:

"TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.—The *Sun* publishes in its advertising columns to-day an offer that will make many a wearer of opals examine with care the gleaming gems in their possession, in the hope that the tradition of good luck which so often attaches to them may in their case be fulfilled. Ten thousand dollars is offered for evidence that will lead to the discovery of an intermitting flame-like opal having engraved on the under side the letters D X V. It is not probable, from the description, that the gem is worth one-half, perhaps not a quarter of that amount; but as the party offering this unprecedented reward is abundantly able to pay the same, there is little doubt that if the gem is in existence it will be found. It is said to be unique, and a cast of the lettering is in existence so that imposition will be impossible. We know no more about the purpose of the advertisement than our readers, but from the fact that advertisements referring to a similar stone have for many years appeared at intervals in our city papers—sometimes in connection with a supposed crime—we naturally infer that some indefatigable sleuth-hound of justice is hot upon the trail of some bloody-handed malefactor."

Great drops of sweat rolled off the pallid face of Mr. Kishu as he read, and fell down upon the dank page that lay on his desk.

He had never violated the law *but once*—only once, and that was long ago barred by the law's mercy! There was no blood upon his hands. Souls do not bleed. And he had never killed anything more important than a soul. It is not unlawful to kill souls—oh, no! He could not be punished—but the shame! Could he ever buy the respect of men again if his one unlawful act were known? Who was this mysterious enemy that had dogged him for years under a dozen different aliases? He had never dared try to find out; now he must know. Could it be Lampson? Was his own money to pay for his own destruction?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LOVE'S GILDED HEADSTONE.

"Good-by," said Frank Marsh, lifting his hat to Lilian Kishu as she stopped at the door of her father's office. "No, thank you, I won't come in. I'm afraid the paternal hasn't much use for me, doesn't look kindly on me because of a certain inherited impecuniosity. I say, Lily, if it wasn't for you I should be tempted to wish he had never grown rich; or rather, if it wasn't for you I should not care whether he were rich or poor."

"I am sure that has never made any difference with me," said Lilian reproachfully. She let go of the knob and sauntered on beside him. There was a soft flush upon her cheek, but no trace of self-consciousness. He was her old friend and it was pleasant to be with him: that was all.

"That's a fact," said the handsome young fellow lightly. "I don't know of anybody I would ask to do a favor for me as soon as my old playmate. I suppose you'd get me a place on the *Thunderbolt* if I should leave the *Breeze*, even if it cost you a—well, a diamond ring?"

The girl laughed contentedly.

"I'd do my very best," she said.

The street was crowded and a little ripple of hurrying passers-by separated them for a moment as she made this reply. They were city-bred from childhood, and never minded such interruption; or rather, they felt that quiet separation from the rest of the world which is nowhere so complete as in the crowded streets of a great city.

"I don't doubt it," he said as they came together again. "Perhaps you would even get Lampson's place for me if it were vacant."

"Of course I would. Wouldn't that be splendid!" she exclaimed enthusiastically. "Papa would like you the best in the world if he were only acquainted with you."

"Just what I think," said Marsh with a shrug; "but unfortunately he shows no special inclination to improve his opportunities in that direction."

They were separated again, and after a moment passed into a side street leading toward the office of the *Breeze.*

"By the way, Lily, speaking about rings, it seems to me you have quit wearing some of yours, lately. What does it mean?"

"Oh," said the girl dolefully, "I wish some one would tell me what to do; I feel so bad."

"Have you broken with Mr. Eastman?" asked the young man almost under his breath.

"I—yes—I suppose so. You see, papa—he insisted, and—and——"

"Do you love him, Lily?"

The girl did not look up, nor note the tremor in her companion's voice.

"He is the best man in the world, and it hurts me so to know that he suffers," she answered sorrowfully.

"But do you love him?"

"Why, I suppose so—of course. I wish you were my brother so that I could tell you all about it and ask your advice."

She looked up at the tall Adonis by her side, and was amazed to see his face grow white and his lips shut hard under the light mustache.

"Why, Frank, what is the matter?" she asked, taking his arm. They had never got over the intimacies of the boy-and-girl period. He did not answer.

"Tell me," she insisted anxiously. "What is it?"

"Why, Lilian, can you not see that it is the one thing I am grateful for?"

He turned his white face toward her, and his deep blue eyes burned down into hers with a flame that startled her.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"That I am *not* your brother."

Her eyes fell beneath his ardent gaze, and a vivid flush mantled neck and cheek. Instinctively she let go his arm and turned to go back.

"Lilian!" he exclaimed, catching her by the arm, "do not be angry! I could not help it!"

She did not reply, but walked slowly back, her gaze still downcast and the flush showing on her cheek.

"You will at least say good-by?" he pleaded.

"You are going away?"

"I must."

"You might wait—a while at least."

"Not now—I—I cannot afford it."

"But you might get a—a better place!"

"Any other place is better for me now!"

"Oh!"

The exclamation seemed to escape her lips unconsciously. They walked on a few steps farther.

"Well, good-by," he said resolutely, stopping and holding out his hand. She laid hers in it mechanically.

"Good-by," she said quickly, stealing a glance up at him. The sun shone on his brown, clustering curls as he stood uncovered. Then she cast down her eyes again and walked quickly away.

"How handsome he is," she thought. "What a pity!"

What it was that was pitiful she did not define even to herself. Perhaps she did not know. Her head was bent down and her cheeks burning; she only knew that she was hurrying back to her father's office. She did not mind the people in the street, for she knew they were not minding her.

"Miss Lilian!"

How well she knew the voice! The very tone brought rest. She knew the face she would see before she looked up; but she did look up fearlessly, gratefully.

"Oh! Mr. Eastman—Murvale. Come with me, do, to the office!"

She laid her hand on his arm as she spoke, and then let it fall as he turned and walked beside her. They did not speak until they reached the office door.

"Shall I call a carriage for you?" he asked, anxiously, noting the pallor that had succeeded the flush.

"No, I thank you. I will rest here awhile. You are very kind."

She bowed and opened the door. He raised his hat and walked on.

Thomas started to open the door of the private office when his employer's daughter entered, apologizing for his delinquency in not observing her approach.

"Never mind, Thomas. I will sit here a little while. Is papa very busy?"

"Sure he's had a deal upon his hands the day, Mr. Lampson being gone."

"Where is Lampson?"

"Gone upon the divil's own errand, mum. It's mesilf that wishes the unsightly raskil would niver find his way back at all."

"Why, Thomas! You should not speak that way of one so unfortunate."

"His legs is a bit weak, it's true, but his tongue's able-bodied, mum, an' he can do a whole man's work, or two or three of 'em, belike, an' get time for mischief an' nonsense as would take another man all his time to study out, besides."

"What sort of mischief, Thomas?"

"Rhoimes an' the loike."

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Lampson writes poetry."

"If ye call it poetry. Sure it's enough to set a man's hair on ind and make him think the place is haunted, specially when one can see him, grittin' his teeth an' wrigglin' as if every bone in his body was broke, or hoppin' down off his stool an' stampin' up an' down the flure with his man's body an' boy's feet, a-spoutin' of it! Sure, it makes me old afore me time a-watchin' uv him. Look at that, Miss, do you call that poetry? I found it on the flure after he'd cut out, lavin' Mr. Kishu, dear man, alone—that might have been murdered all by himself. Sure it gave me quite a start till I found he was safe."

He handed Lilian a sheet of paper as he spoke.

"Now, Miss Lilian, it isn't safe, the way yer fayther does, in his private office there that no one can hear a word outside of, an' only me an' Goggles out here an' often both of us gone an' the clerks beyant knowin' nothin' of it at all."

"O Thomas!" exclaimed the frightened girl, leaning back in her chair.

"I beg pardon, mum; sure I forgot intirely. Shall I get ye a glass of water, mum?"

The man hurried off without waiting for an answer. The clocks were striking as usual. Lilian smiled as she heard them; and then wondered whether they were beginning to strike the next hour or concluding the chimes of the one last past. As she waited she glanced at the sheet she held in her hand and read in the faultless chirography of the missing secretary,* these stanzas:

20.

"And crescent Dian, stirred at last,
Slid in her shallop down the clouds;
And all the buried dead, in shrouds
Rose up, and came and stood aghast.

21.

"Vast, serpent, swirling, sphere-sprite Gyres,
Enwheeled round whirling worlds on high,
In black, abysmal gulf of sky,
Whipt down to quench their pristine fires.

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* The verses attributed to Lampson are parts of an unpublished poem, entitled "The Mad Artist's Chaunt," by Mr. J. H. Temple, the manuscript of which was in the author's possession when these chapters were written. (See also page 353). The idea of attributing them to a Russian poet named Worsoff, was the result of a jocular suggestion by Mr. Temple that the best way to get his poems published might be to have them brought out as translations "*from the Russian.*"

22.

" And huge sun-spheres, enspaced a-deep,
And lodestone worlds far out the ken
Of puling, gnat-souled daws of men,
Swept down the empyrean steep.

23.

" Fierce Bedouin Bruxas, all wing-weird
With fringe-fret, flame flakes of the Devil,
Forsook his hellish, midnight revel—
Engentled as a child afeard.

24.

" And skeletons that sank to bleach
For ages 'neath the sea-salt gloom
Of Ocean's ever-opening tomb,
Arose, and clambered up the beach."

They were evidently part of a longer poem. Lilian shuddered as she read the horribly grotesque fancies.

" He's mad," she said to herself, " mad as a March hare. Yet there is a weird beauty in what he writes. But papa really ought not to have him here; he ought to have Frank."

Her face burned with a hot blush as this thought crossed her mind.

" Sure nobody would think ye were that pale; I thought ye was goin' to faint a minute ago," said Thomas, as he handed her a tiny goblet of water on a dainty tray.

The electric bell over Mr. Lampson's desk rang furiously as he spoke.

" I must go to *him* now," said the man uneasily.

Lilian reached out her hand and taking the tray, sat sipping the water thoughtfully as the servant disappeared.

A messenger boy entered and stood looking about the room when informed that Mr. Kishu was engaged. Then he asked for "Goggles." Lilian took his book and receipted for the message he had brought. The boy sauntered out, pausing for a long look through the polished glass door at the fair lady and the luxurious office. Lilian smiled as she met his gaze fixed wonderingly upon her. She liked to be admired, even by a street gamin. She was glad her beauty gave pleasure. She remembered the words of Murvale Eastman when he had told her that beauty was a blessing which should be used to give happiness. She remembered his face, too, as she had seen it a few moments before, and forgot the boy looking in at the window. What tenderness there was in it! Yet there was a sadness too. Her beauty had not brought *him* pleasure; of that she was sure. Yet how noble and chivalric he was—not one word or look of reproach. He was one of whose love any woman might be proud. And he loved her. The memory of a dark stairway and a clinging embrace rose before her mind. Then she thought, with strange perversity, how nice it would be if Frank were in Lampson's place. He was so perfectly charming in his manner and so handsome! Why could not Murvale Eastman have been like him? Then the blushes chased themselves over her cheek. She knew, now, that Frank Marsh loved her too. It seemed as if she had always known it, if she had only thought about it. She was glad of it, too, but she did not love him; she was sure of that, but blushed again as she assured herself of it. Thomas came out and held open the door of the private office for her to enter. The boy who had left the impress of his mouth and nose on the heavy plate glass fell away from it like filings from a dead magnet, as she disappeared.

"Ain t she a stunner?" he said to himself, and loitered on his way, dreaming of the time when he would have just such an office, and just such a wife as Lilian Kishu.

"Did you know you had a new secretary, papa?" asked Lilian, handing him the message the boy had brought and stooping at the same time to receive his kiss. "I found Lampson gone and so receipted for your message myself."

"Has the boy gone?"

"He said there was no answer. Why don't you get another secretary, papa?"

"I suppose I shall have to," said Mr. Kishu, glancing over the message, with a look of satisfaction on his face. "Do you want the place? I give you warning it will take rare talent to fill it!"

"Oh, I would like it above all things," said Lilian, enthusiastically; "but, you bad papa," she added with a pout, "you never let me have what I want."

She had seated herself in a chair in front of him, and her bantering reproach was balm for the troubles the day had brought him. Wilton Kishu was literally "in love" with his daughter. His wife had been in the background ever since Lilian had been large enough to be petted and exhibited by her father. His wife had never been his ideal. She was well enough at the outset of his career, but her charms had faded before he had time to exult in them. He had risen into a higher level of society, but he could not take her with him. She was comely and could carry off not unfittingly the rich dresses he provided; but she seemed quite unable otherwise to adapt herself to her new surroundings. In one sense she seemed to fill her new position even better than her husband: but she could not make herself at home in it; she hated to be patronized and looked down upon. Her one ambition had been to assert herself in some striking and notable manner against these new associations which fretted her with at least the fancied intimation of superiority. Besides this, she loved her husband with a devotion which was absolutely self-annihilating except in one respect—she could not endure the thought that he should love another better than herself. For this reason she had been in a sense jealous of her daughter almost from her infancy, and her favorite scheme of marrying Lilian to a foreign prince had a double object: first, to enable her to outshine the society to which she owed a sort of grudge; and, second, to separate the daughter from her father, leaving him solely to her own adulatory devotion. There was nothing cruel or unmotherly in this. She did not wish to wreck her daughter's happiness, but to secure her own.

The fair girl's pouting complaint was as incense, therefore, to the enamored father. He loved her better than himself, but he loved to be loved by her better than anything else in the world. The keenest pangs he had felt of late had been caused by the thought that he must cause her suffering. Her sadness had been a constant reproach to him, and now to find her in her accustomed teasing, caressing mood was the most exquisite pleasure.

"As if there were anything I could refuse you," he said with smiling reproachfulness. "I really believe I could not do such a thing even for your own good."

"Yet you would not let me have Lampson's place?"

"My dear, you know you do not want it."

"How long will he be away?"

"It is not likely he will ever return."

"Why not?"

"He has gone to Bermuda with ten thousand dollars in his pocket."

"Mercy! Did he steal it?"

"I gave it to him."

"Then why will he not return?"

"The opportunity for indulgence is more than he can resist."

Mr. Kishu spoke very solemnly. Both were silent for a time. The clocks were striking a half-hour, but neither noticed them.

"It will be hard to fill his place," said Lilian after a moment.

"It is a position of great responsibility and not a little difficulty."

"Why don't you get Frank Marsh?"

Mr. Kishu started.

"Pshaw! he's not steady enough."

"Why, Papa Kishu, you know he is just as steady as a clock. Besides, he's so cheerful and gentlemanly."

"Too handsome, by all odds. He'd be falling in love with my daughter first I knew."

"Was that the reason you kept Lampson? How discreet! Well, you needn't fear. Your daughter has other plans for her future."

"Yes, I forgot; you are to marry the prince."

"Never!"

"What do you mean, then?"

"No matter. I have no more idea of marrying Frank Marsh than Prince Moraydin, but I would like to do an old playmate a good turn and give my father a faithful friend and servant at the same time."

"You speak very positively about this young man."

"A girl in my position comes to know young men, if she has any sense at all," said Lilian quietly. "I'm not a milkmaid."

"Let Wilton Kishu's daughter alone for finding out what people are like," said the father proudly.

Lilian smiled; she knew her father's weakness.

"His father was my partner once," continued Kishu with a twinge of remorse.

"And you ought to give him a chance to retrieve his father's misfortune," said Lilian pointedly.

Wilton Kishu looked at his daughter keenly. She knew the story of her father's rise, but gave no hint of such knowledge in her artless gaze. She had taken off her gloves and his eyes fell upon her hands crossed on her lap. He had been wondering all day how he should get the opal from her, without awakening suspicion. For the first time he missed it from her finger.

"Where is your ring?" he asked anxiously, "the opal, I mean?"

"Did you think I would break with a lover and retain his gift?" she asked with some haughtiness.

"But it was not his—only the setting, at least."

"He put it on my finger, and fastened it with a kiss, too," said Lilian, casting down her eyes and showing signs of tears.

"And you gave it back to him, I suppose."

"I gave it to a friend of his."

"Very well; I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll get me that ring, I'll let you name the secretary."

"At what salary?"

"Two thousand."

"You can afford to do better."

"Well, four, then."

"It's a bargain."

Lilian arose and leaning over the back of the padded office chair in which her father sat, kissed him again and again.

"But how will you get the ring?"

"Never fear, I shall get it." She spoke with quiet assurance.

"You may not find it so easy."

"I shall get it," she answered confidently.

The father twisted himself around in the chair and looked up at his daughter's face. It was smiling and triumphant.

"What makes you so sure?" he asked anxiously.

"Because the man I rely on accomplishes what he undertakes."

"And he is——"

"Murvale Eastman."

"Why do you think he will give it back to you?"

"I expect to be his wife." Her face was set and firm.

"You expect to marry him! Marry Murvale Eastman! Not much—not if I know myself. He is my enemy—my worst enemy, and I have just got him in my clutch! Look there!"

He spread the message she had brought before her. It read:

"Not the least doubt; no such poet as Worsoff ever lived. It is a sheer fabrication—a lie out and out. God forgive him. G. A. PHUE."

"Well, what does that mean?" Lilian asked.

"Why, he's a liar. Don't you see?"

"Who?"

"Eastman."

"Murvale Eastman?"

"Of course."

"Why, papa, you are crazy! You don't know the man. He *couldn't* lie! A lie is not possible to him!"

"Bah, ministers are human, and the Association knows it!" he sneered. "You won't make them believe a grown man *can't* lie!"

"Who is this Worsoff?"

"Why, don't you see?" he replied earnestly. "He isn't anybody. That's what's the matter. Eastman quoted him in his speech the other night, or pretended to, rather. There's the report; and it turns out there isn't any such man. It's a flam, you see; some of his own lingo dressed up and packed off on the crowd as another man's poetry."

"Who made this report?" asked Lilian, turning over the pages.

"Why, Lampson, of course."

"And he's in Bermuda?"

"He has started, I suppose."

"Do you think any one will believe this story?"

"Lampson is the best stenographer in the city."

"Do you think it will be believed?"

"Well, it will be apt to stick, anyhow; he can't disprove it. What do you say now?"

"I shall marry Murvale Eastman!"

Lilian was very pale as she stuffed a paper into her pocket, and began putting on her gloves; but she did not quail before her father's wrathful eyes as he leaped to his feet and exclaimed:

"I forbid it! I will disown you, disinherit you!"

"Father!" said Lilian clasping her hand over his mouth, "you don't know what you are saying!"

She leaned forward and whispered with hard, white lips into his ear.

"My God!" he exclaimed, casting a glance of mingled terror and reproach upon her. Then he dropped all in a heap upon the chair, and his head fell forward on his arms outspread upon the desk.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN UNREASONABLE CONSCIENCE.

WILTON KISHU had done but one unlawful act in his whole life, and that was long ago; so he said; so he believed. This was not a crime of the most heinous character, even if it was exactly criminal at all; but it rested heavily upon his conscience, nevertheless. The statute of limitation—that merciful bar which the law puts between a man and all but the most serious offenses—had long ago interposed to shield him from punishment. Yet he could not forget it, and of late it seemed as if everything conspired to recall it to his memory.

He had done many worse things, things which affected more lives, and affected them more injuriously, but they were not unlawful; so his conscience did not prick him as to them. He had been one of a company of conspirators who destroyed the business and depreciated the stock of a great railroad, the wreck of which convulsed the financial world, swept away the dependence of thousands, and condemned myriads of families to hopeless poverty and the bitter struggle for daily bread. But that was lawful. They acted under advice of counsel, and all enlightened people know that such things are necessary. All good men and women know that civilization would perish and business be at a standstill if the law did not protect the rich in robbery and abandon the poor to oppression. Wilton Kishu had never had any qualms about that "deal;" indeed, he used often to tell with what anxiety he waited the result. Well he might; if the scheme had failed, he would have been a pauper.

He had been one of the directors of a mining company, too, who had used their power with reckless disregard of right to squeeze a dime here and a penny there from their employees. There was no crime in that. If the men worked for them they must live in the company's houses, buy at the company's stores, abide by the company's terms, and pay the company's prices. This is the law of dependency, the privilege of the employer, the fiat of Christian civilization. The Christ would rather a hecatomb of such weak souls fell every year upon death, and that a myriad other hecatombs were impoverished, dwarfed, weakened, and enslaved, than that the least tittle of the rich man's right to control the earth and its fullness for his own behoof and enjoyment should fail. For the rich man is the prop of civilization and the mainstay of Christianity. He builds the churches, endows the schools, and should be allowed to plunder at will, in order that he may disburse at his own good pleasure.

The company was administered on strictly business principles, the most profit for the least expenditure. It was warned again and again that an old working was insecure. But it would take a great deal of money to make it safe. It was nearly exhausted and would hardly pay to put in good condition. If the miners did not choose to work there, they could go to some other mine. Of course, they would have to leave their homes and take their chances. One day there was a puff of white smoke, followed by black dust from the pit's mouth! There are forty-eight miners entombed under a brown hill-top, which rises bleak and bare above them like an eternal appeal to the justice of heaven. There was nothing unlawful about that, though. However, Wilton Kishu never liked to travel that way afterward. He urged liberality to the bereaved, and induced the company to give each widow five hundred dollars and a year's lease of her house, on condition that suit was not brought for damages. This was good business. It would have taken much more to put the mine in order, and the profit on a month's labor of the husbands would pay the gratuity to the widows. That was business—*lawful* business—joined with Christian charity!

But Mr. Kishu had *once* done a wrong, an unlawful wrong, for which his conscience had reproached him, and which he knew would point the finger of scorn at him forever should it become known. He thought it all over as his head lay on his crossed arms upon the desk after his daughter had whispered that word in his ear. It was a foolish word, which might mean little or much, but Mr. Kishu's conscience was very tender just at this time, and the great financier and philanthropist shrank away from the slender, white-faced daughter whom he loved so well, as if she were an avenging angel.

It was a strange picture that swept before the blinded, self-accusing eyes, a picture that long antedated his fame and the Church of the Golden Lilies. This was what he saw:

He had just set up his carriage and was beginning to be known as "the prosperous Mr. Kishu." None of his great successes had yet been projected or, if projected, had not been carried into execution. He had his eye on certain outlying property which he thought would soon be in the way of improvement. It seemed to him certain that a railroad would cut it in twain on the way to the city's heart. Now and then he was accustomed to go and look it over. He had no doubt as to its ultimate value, and he was pretty sure no one else yet realized it. Just then there was an opportunity to buy. It had recently descended to heirs who were of divergent interests, thought little of future possibilities, and wanted each his portion in available funds. There were two questions to be considered: how long before the transformation scene would begin, and how to secure the money for the purchase? He had heard something that very day which convinced him that the advance in price would not be long delayed. But the money? It did not require a great amount, only $2,000 for a first payment; but it was just that much more than he had in hand, and he dared not strain his credit. He had been obliged to borrow largely for his legitimate business, and it would not do for a business man to be regarded as a speculator in those days. At that time speculation was not so general nor so highly esteemed as now. If he could only raise a few hundred dollars he was sure he could hold on until they ripened into thousands.

He drove out one spring afternoon to examine the property again. It was on the very outskirts of the city which already thought itself great—beyond them, indeed, in what was still called the country. The way to it lay through lanes in which poverty hides its squalor, where filth and vice abound; the pens in which civilization propagates crime and disease.

As he passed through one of these, Mr. Kishu saw a well-dressed child battling against the annoying assaults of a half-dozen hectoring gamins. She ran toward him insinctively for protection. It was easy to see that she did not belong in the neighborhood. He reached down and lifted her into the low phaeton in which he rode. He was very fond of children and they quickly recognized his kindness of heart. The little one was weeping bitterly and scolding her persecutors with great vehemence. In reply to his questions she answered sobbingly, that she wanted to go to "mamma." Who mamma was or where she lived, he could gather no information. She had been pushed over in the mud and her pretty skirts were sadly soiled. She was a winsome child, dark-eyed, with abundant tresses. Her words were no doubt intelligible to the mother who had lost her, but to the man who had found her they were as meaningless as Greek. She had a trinket in her hand which she unceremoniously deposited in his palm as if for safe keeping, and putting her head upon his lap soon sobbed herself to sleep.

Her rescuer put the trinket in his vest pocket and drove on toward the piece of land he coveted, glancing down now and then at the flushed cheeks, and fondling the firm, round chin upon his lap. He had no children then, and had often proposed to his wife the adoption of one. Mrs. Kishu did not favor this project. Perhaps she felt it something of a reproach to her own childlessness, as most women do. But there were other objections also. Mr. Kishu wanted to adopt a girl; Mrs. Kishu preferred a boy. Mr. Kishu wanted one having light hair; Mrs. Kishu preferred the hair should be dark. He wondered as he looked at the sleeping foundling in his arms if this child might not serve as a compromise. It had beautiful dark hair and eyes. Perhaps, in consideration of these, his wife would consent to overlook its sex. But he feared there was little prospect of such concession; the truth being that one of Mrs. Kishu's weaknesses was an inordinate jealousy of her lord and master. To her apprehension he was a man of such marvelous qualities that she could not understand how any woman could fail to worship him. Besides this, his manner was so flattering and deferential. His business, too, brought him in contact with a great many of her sex. She could not believe that they all beheld his many attractions and escaped unscotched. Wilton Kishu was well aware of this weakness of his wife. Perhaps he had half-unconsciously encouraged it. Such suspicion is not altogether unpleasant to some natures. Whether there was any ground for it or not it recurred to him at his time, and he sighed regretfully as he admitted to himself the improbability that a child having the dark locks of the sleeping girl would ever become an inmate of their household. Women are so unreasonable!

Thus mused Mr. Kishu as he drove leisurely toward the tract of land which in his mind's eye he saw covered with stately buildings and worth fabulous sums per square foot. As yet, it was only "acre-property," and not generally regarded as very valuable even under that name and style. It was on the bank of a river. A ravine which headed almost in the heart of the city ran through it, debouching into the river. Opposite, another and a larger tributary entered, whose arms stretched away back into a region full of rough but unmeasured wealth, lumber, coal, iron, granite, the very thews and sinews of modern civilization. It was a bright, sparkling stream, cutting its way through innumerable ledges of flinty rock, and offering along its banks the only available levels by which the iron horse could reach the treasures for which commerce was already beginning to yearn.

Mr. Kishu stopped his horse on the steep river bank and, crossing over a slight foot-bridge which spanned the narrow ravine, began to reconnoiter the ground on which the battle of profit and foresight was to be fought out. In imagination he could see the smoke of the locomotive streaming on the wind as the train flew away up the valley. He did not doubt his expectation would be fulfilled; but when? That was the question. Would it be in six months, a year, a decade? Alas! he could not tell. There was nothing on which to base an estimate. Nothing? What was that on which the sun flashed just then? Mr. Kishu stepped behind some sheltering shrubs and watched. After a moment he made out two men on a rocky shelf, half a mile away, adjusting a theodolite. What did it mean? His heart stood still with apprehension as he realized that he beheld the fulfillment of his dream. These men were the path-finders of the railway which he had foreseen would come. They were spying out its way into the city. Within a week every foot of the land where he stood would be bought up. The magnates of the railway would be sure to monopolize the advantages to be derived from the location of the road by secret information of the route it would take. He saw it, and knew that he must act quickly or lose his chance. He walked rapidly to the farther edge of the tract, counting his steps as he went. Then he returned and stepping on the foot-bridge, cast a sharp glance up the narrow, bushy dell. He would not get much for the right of way along it unless he associated with him some of the directors. But on either side there was room for almost unlimited development. He must and would have it.

His mind once made up, Wilton Kishu was a man of prompt and resolute action. There were three things to be done, and done at once: raise the money, get the title, and find the man to negotiate the right of way. So convinced was he of the necessity of prompt action that he started on a run across the narrow foot-bridge, his brain already teeming with plans for effecting his purpose. Half-way across he heard a scream which drove from his mind all thought of profit. A bare-footed, elf-like figure leaped from the carriage with the child in his arms and ran toward the bushes that grew along the river bank. Mr. Kishu was then a very vigorous man. His life had been active, and when the foreman of a company of workmen, there had been few under him who would have cared to provoke him to the exercise of his strength. A few swift steps brought him now almost within arm's-length of the young ruffian whose movements were obstructed by the load he carried. His angry demeanor boded condign punishment for the disturber of the child's slumber.

"Don't you touch me! I'll jump!" shrieked the ragged freebooter, darting out upon the extreme verge of a grassy point that jutted over the shelving bank.

"What are you doing with that child?" asked Kishu, angrily, pausing two or three steps away.

"She ain't yours; she's mine; ain't she, Sissy? There—there!" he added soothingly, bringing the crying child around in front of him.

"Who are you?"

"Oh, I ain't nobody; and she's my sister," grinned the boy. He was a ragged, impudent gamin, such as the city's slums breed by the thousand every year.

"You lie!" said Mr. Kishu, taking a step nearer.

"Don't yer come no nigher, er I'll jump," exclaimed the boy, spreading his feet far apart and crouching as if to make good his words. Mr. Kishu reached out his hand

and broke off a branch of witch-hazel from a bush growing near.

"What yer goin' ter do?" asked the boy, watching the man draw the withe through his hand, stripping off the leaves and branches.

"I'm going to whip you within an inch of your life, if you don't bring that child here instantly," said the man resolutely.

"Better not try it, Mr. Kishu," answered the boy with defiance in his tone. "I won't be whipped ner I won't be tuck neither. She ain't yours any more'n she's mine, an' you can't git her nor me neither, unless you pay the reward an' promise not to ask no questions ner do me no harm."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Kishu, seeing the boy's determination, and thinking it best to parley for a while, at least.

"I know who she belongs to, an' they'll be offerin' a reward an' I'll get it fer bringin' of her back, don't yer see?"

"How much do you expect?"

"Wal, that depends. Now you've come into the business I s'pose it won't be much. I'll have to take her back before you set the bobbies on me. Perhaps ten or twenty dollars—and her clothes."

"Her clothes!"

"Of course; it wouldn't do to hide her with them clothes on," said the precocious ruffian with a glance at the dainty garments in which the child was arrayed.

"You seem to understand the business," said the man in astonishment.

"I've done something at it," answered the boy coolly.

"Well, if I pay you ten dollars and agree to say nothing, you'll tell me where her people live?"

"An' her clothes, mister; don't forgit them. I'll have to divvy with my mates, an' we couldn't lose them."

"Well, how much for the clothes?" asked the man, pretending to acquiesce. In truth he was measuring the distance between himself and the child thief, and wondering whether it would be safe to spring upon him where he stood. He had spent his own boyhood in the country and knew how treacherous were the sodded points which jut over the sandy bank of a stream, and concluded it was better to overreach the young ruffian if he could.

"How much fer the clothes?" asked the boy deliberately, holding the child out to inspect its apparel. "Wal, they're wuth more, but we'll take five dollars—five dollars, an'——"

The sentence was never finished. The boy threw himself forward toward the man with a shriek of fear, and the man launched himself downward toward the boy and girl, clinging to the witch-hazel bush, all three disappearing over the bank—all but the man's hand clasped round the tough, solidly-rooted shrub. After a moment he reappeared, flinging the girl upward on the sward. Then he clambered up himself. He had lost his hat and was much exhausted, and fell down upon the grass panting with exertion. The child ceased crying and crept toward him. Its face was scratched and bleeding. What had happened was that the point of earth on which the boy stood had suddenly given way, and Mr. Kishu had barely managed to save the little girl. He had done this at the risk of his own life, too. There was nothing wrong in this. Indeed, it was an act little short of heroism, and he recalled with a distinct pang the feeling of complacent gratitude that thrilled him as he lay panting on the sunlit sward beside the sobbing child he had rescued from death.

For what fate had she been reserved? Wilton Kishu groaned as he thought it might have been better for the winsome creature had she been left to find death at the foot of the precipice.

After a while he rose, brushed the dirt off his clothes, and holding fast by the bush, peered over the edge of the bank. He could see the track of the little land-slide which had just occurred, almost to the bottom. His hat was on the edge of the water several feet from the foot of the bank, bottom upward, half-full of earth and stones. The water looked deep just beyond it. He wondered what had become of the boy, and called to him several times. There were some stunted trees and a few bushes near the water, which had fallen from above from time to time. He concluded that the young buccaneer had hidden among these during his own struggle to regain the bank. It never occurred to him that he might be dead.

It was nearly sundown when he untied his horse and started to drive back to the city. It was quite dark and the child was asleep before he reached the lighted streets, and no one noticed that the man in the shadow of the carriage top was without a hat. He drove to his home; let himself in with his latch-key; gave the child to his wife, telling her to take care of it and promising to return and explain everything, seized a hat from the rack, drove to the stable where his horse was boarded, and then having become absorbed in the possibilities of his new enterprise, rushed into a restaurant, bolted a few mouthfuls, went to his office, and lighting the gas sat down to plan for its achievement. It was past eleven when he returned to his home. Turning up the gas, he went to his wife's bedroom and began hastily packing a valise.

"I shall have to be absent three or four days, perhaps a week," he said in explanation. "There isn't a minute to lose. I must catch the twelve-o'clock train. If everything turns out well, I shall make more in a fortnight than I ever have in a year before. Good-by."

He leaned over the bed and kissed his wife. His face was flushed with excitement, and his eyes burned with the glow of anticipated triumph. His wife received his caress with indifference.

"What shall I do with that—that—child?" she asked.

"Oh, the little girl I brought home? How is she?"

"Well enough, except for a few bruises. Who is she? Where did you——"

"Don't ask me now. I haven't time to explain. Take care of her—do what you please with her."

"What's her name?"

"I don't know."

"Wilton Kishu," said the wife, sitting up in bed to add impressiveness to her words, "don't try to deceive me; I know that is not true."

"So much the better," answered the husband, willfully or unconsciously misconstruing her words. "Send her home if you know her. Good-by!"

Mrs. Kishu heard the front door close behind her departing husband and sank back upon her pillow to weep bitter tears.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW GIVING BLESSES THE GIVER.

It was a month before Mr. Kishu returned to his home. As is so often the case in business matters, the exigencies of his new enterprise detained him longer than he expected. He had been hurried from point to point by the imperative demands of the situation, but with the dogged resolution which characterized him, he had never abandoned the project, and had at length succeeded. He had raised the money; had found every heir; had secured an unimpeachable title, and negotiated the right of way with the president of the company, upon terms sufficient to reimburse him for his investment even after the "divvy" made with the official, and leave the rest of the property clear profit. It was his first considerable real estate deal. He had always had a fancy—a sort of instinct—for such operations, and this opened the way for the great Flat-iron Tract speculation, which first lifted him into the rank of those requiring seven figures to express their wealth.

How had he raised the money to carry out the deal? This was a question many asked, a question neither his book-keeper nor his banker could answer. He was the only one who knew. His bank account had not been lessened by a dollar, and his name was on no unpaid note. Naturally enough, Mr. Kishu was happy when he returned to his office and found that his business had progressed satisfactorily in his absence. Yet when his clerk left him alone at his desk, he trembled as he thought of the wrong he had done—not with fear, but with a sort of blind gratitude for his escape. He was a man of an essentially religious nature, only his religion was colored by a supreme selfishness, so that he thought nothing of the incongruity of breathing a prayer of thankfulness, not for his escape from temptation, but for having been preserved from the consequences of the wrong by which he had profited. For he had escaped—there was no doubt of that. All the evidences of his evil act were here in his own hand.

He took a paper box out of his pocket, removed a bunch of pink-hued cotton from it, and emptied out into his hand a magnificent opal. How it flashed and glowed and burned in flickering, changeful iridescence as it lay upon his palm and the sun fell upon it through the window! He turned and closed the blind. It made him nervous to think that any one might see the gem in his possession. Then he locked the door of his inner room, lighted a lamp, took out a curious lead-colored trinket from a drawer in his desk, touched a spring and opened it, held a part of it over the flame of the lamp until a black, frothy substance rose and bubbled over its edge.

In this he hid the opal, watched it cool, pressed the black, crystalline cement back even with the sides, closed the case, held it a moment over the flame, then placed it in his pocket.

"There," he said to himself, "I defy anybody to prove that has been out of its place. Now I will find its owner and return it. Perhaps he doesn't know what it contains and would be glad to sell it."

Mr. Kishu's face beamed with satisfaction. He did not know that in a city a hundred miles away, a man was at that very moment filing away in a cabinet the two parts of a wax impression of the gem just restored to its place, and with it the name and address of Wilton Kishu.

"It is one of the things it is well enough to have a record of," said the dealer in gems. "It may be all right, and then again—well—one knows what he does know. There's no doubt that has been in the hands of more than one of our people before now. Somehow, it seems as if I ought to know it—like an old friend, half-forgotten—but I can't recall it. Anyhow, there is evidence that for thirty days it was in my hands as security for two thousand dollars. Perhaps some time it may come back. Gems are queer things; men and peoples die, but stones live on forever. Cleopatra may have drunk her pearls, but I have no doubt her diamonds are on some lady's fingers or in some dealer's window to-day. A man able to cut his name on one would be immortal. Of course, in a sense, the man who works and polishes a gem does that, and I ought to know who cut this one, or at least when it was done; but somehow I cannot fix it."

The pawnbroker was slipping the drawer into his cabinet just as the successful speculator opened the door of his office and called for the file of daily papers for the month previous. Mr. Kishu always read the papers, and if not at home when they came out, went carefully through them on his return. That was the reason he always knew what had occurred in the city.

He found many things to interest him in this file, and cut out a dozen slips which he placed in his pocketbook. One was of "A Lost Child;" another offering a reward for "A Pewter or German Silver Trinket," of peculiar shape. Another, an article moralizing on the fact that not a trace of the lost child had been found, and that it was now quite given up that she had been murdered. The mother was almost insane over the mystery attaching to the child's fate. The police of the city were severely blamed. In two other cases, the child had been returned under circumstances that indicated the existence of an organized band of kidnappers in the city. Mr. Kishu's heart warmed with satisfaction as he thought what joy he would give to the bereaved parents when he should return to them their lost darling. Perhaps in their rapture they would ask him to retain the trinket as a keepsake. Well—it would depend on circumstances what he would do in that case. On the whole, he was well satisfied with himself when he started homeward from his office that afternoon. The good he intended to do quite hid from view the wrong he had done, which indeed was unintentional—or nearly so.

His wife received him with strange fervor, though there was a tearful, pleading look about her eyes. She listened to his apology for his prolonged absence with quiet reproachfulness. He had never been accustomed to consult her in regard to his business transactions and did not enter into details now. He only told her of his success. She answered his enthusiasm with a sigh. But when he asked for the child he had brought home, he was greeted with a flood of tears. At length, in response to his continued importunity, the outraged wife sprang to her feet and said, shaking her trembling finger in his face:

"Wilton Kishu, don't you never mention that child to me again—never! Do you hear? I don't want to reproach you. I am willing to hide your shame, but if you ever mention it again, I will kill myself! Do you see that?" She held toward him a little vial labeled "Strychnia." "I got it on purpose," she exclaimed, "and no matter when it may be, now or twenty years from now, if you ever speak of that child, or so much as look at the woman you have compromised yourself with so shamefully—that very day, Wilton Kishu, there will be an inquest in your house and the world will learn the cause of my death!"

The woman was almost insane in her tragic vehemence.

"But, Maria——" began the amazed husband.

"Not another word!" she interrupted. "I have taken care of her—buried her! You will never find her—you could not if you tried. But you need not fear; she will be well looked after. I have taken care of that. She will be well brought up, and never know that she has anything to be ashamed of. I have provided for her. I sold all my jewels to raise money to do it. I could not find her myself, now; I don't know where she is; but she will never know want. She will have a good home, a Christian home. Is not that enough?"

"But, Maria—you—I—there is a mistake, Maria——" faltered the astounded man in real distress.

"Don't, Wilton, don't!" moaned the self-deceived wife. "Do not add falsehood to your—your—other sins. I have forgiven you; but do not try to deceive me. I cannot bear it, indeed, I cannot, Wilton. Just at this time, too! Oh, if you had only known—I am sure you could not have been so cruel!"

She flung her arms about his neck, muttered some half-audible words, and hung moaning and weeping on his breast. Instantly, the man's harshness changed to tenderness. Surprise and gratification took the place of the frown upon his brow, and his reproaches gave way to caresses. Nevertheless, he slept very little that night, being troubled by the specter of the wrong he had done—or was it by apprehension of what might befall him if it were discovered? On the next morning when he went to his office he dropped in at his lawyer's, and while he waited took up a book on criminal law and read of larceny, grand and petty, and then about kidnapping. It gave him a very uncomfortable sensation.

He thought of making a clean breast of it to the lawyer; but it occurred to him that thirty days had elapsed, and no one had suspected him—why not thirty years? Crimes were not always found out; and if they were, the statute of limitations was often a bar to punishment. He asked some questions carelessly, to find out how long it would be before the law would shield him from the penalty of his wrong. It would be a long time. He would do what he could to make up for the harm he had done —unless—would it be safe to call attention to himself? Would it not be better to wait and take the chances of disclosure? After all, he had really done no one any harm; only events had conspired to make him *seem* a malefactor. He thought the matter over again and again, as the days went on, and could come to no conclusion. Yet his conscience was not easy. Sometimes he thought he would compel his wife to disclose the whereabouts of the child, but he could not bring himself to imperil her life by such excitement as he knew any recurrence to the subject would produce. So the days went by and his feeling grew less acute. Months passed, and then his daughter was born. His conscience still disturbed him, but only at intervals.

After a time, he began to notice a face, which somehow seemed familiar, peering at him through the window of his office, and now and then caught sight of a diminutive form dragging itself away on crutches. One day the truth flashed upon him. He ran out, caught the retreating figure, and dragged it back into the office.

"Don't split on me, mister, don't!" shrieked the frightened boy. "I didn't go to do the kid no harm; you knows that. It wasn't my fault that she got drownded, neither. I hadn't no more idee uv that bank givin' way than you—not a bit! I think I've been hit hard enough for it, too."

"What's your name? Don't lie to me!" said Mr. Kishu, sternly.

"I ain't goin' to, sir—Joe Lampson."

"Well, Joe, I can't make any promises in this matter until you tell me all about it. You will have to tell me who were with you in the kidnapping business, if you expect to get off yourself."

"There wasn't nobody, mister; jes me alone. I had a kind of cave there in the bank, just under the bushes, an' I thought it would be a big thing to carry off a kid now an' then, an' bring 'em back when a reward was offered. I'd read about it, an' it seemed easy enough to do. I didn't 'low to hurt 'em, but just change their clothes, an' take 'em back to their folks an' ask if them was their kids. I'd done it two or three times with little ones. I didn't know how old this gal was, or I wouldn't ever have tried it with her."

"How did you come to pitch upon her, anyhow?"

Mr. Kishu wondered if the boy knew of the trinket in the child's hand.

"Can't tell; I never seed her till you picked her up, drove out close to my den, an' left her there asleep. S'pose 'twas just the chance that set me wild."

"You didn't know where she lived, then?"

"Hadn't the least idee, sir."

Mr. Kishu was silent, wondering what he had best do in regard to this unconscious accomplice in his crime.

"Didn't they find it, sir?" asked the boy in a hoarse whisper.

"Find what?"

"The body, sir—the corpsus, you know?"

"You don't say the child was killed!" exclaimed the man in assumed surprise and horror. "I didn't know that."

"Must have been drownded," said the boy doggedly. "Didn't you hear of it?"

"I had all I could do to save myself, and when I managed to get up on the bank again, you were gone. I thought you had hid the girl. It was about dark, and when I got home I found I must go away that very night. It was a month before I got back. I should have told the police that night, but that would have kept me here as a witness, and I thought you would take the girl home after the fright you had received."

It was a very lame story which the rich man told to cover up his own wrong, but the frightened lad did not notice its inconsistencies.

"I couldn't do nobody no harm ner good then, an' the doctors says I never will no more. I was a-layin' down there on the rocks with a broken back, I was. It wasn't broke short off, but it won't never be no more use ter me, the doctors says, ner my feet neither. I come to after a while, but the gal wasn't there, ner you neither—only your hat. I thought maybe you was drownded too, an' I crawled out an' threw the hat in the river, so they wouldn't accuse me of a hand in it, ye know. After a while I hollered to some folks comin' up the river in a boat, an' they took me the horspital. When I seed you, I was a-hopin' you'd saved the gal, too, though of course that wasn't likely."

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothin'; I can't never do nothin' no more."

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Kishu in real compassion.

The crippled gamin looked up in surprise, and then twisted himself round in an easier position, resting on one hand. The man stooped down, picked him up, and set him in one of the chairs. Then he locked the office door, and walked back and forth a long time thinking what course he had better pursue.

"Can you read?" he asked at length, stopping before the boy.

"I could, but the doctors says this ere hurt has jes knocked my eyes askew, so I'd have to wear some sort of glasses made fer 'em special, an' tain't very sure they'd work then. I can see big things an' manage to git along the street, but it's as much by feelin' as by sight."

"Where are your parents?"

"Don't know, sir," sullenly.

"Don't know?"

"Wal, dad he's in fer crackin' a safe, and mam—she's dead—died o' drink, I s'pose."

"How do you expect to live?"

"Same as others that can't work and don't have no money—have to steal."

"Suppose I should put you where you would be treated well, and taught something by which you could earn an honest living."

"An' never tell on me?" asked the boy eagerly.

"I would never tell as long as you did your duty."

"I'll do the best I kin," said the boy stolidly.

"I don't see that any good would result from having you imprisoned."

"It's a hangin' matter." The boy spoke with that positiveness which familiarity with crime brings in regard to the penalty.

"Or hanged, either," continued Mr. Kishu.

"Wouldn't do a bit of good," rejoined the boy assentingly.

"On the other hand," resumed the man, "you might become a useful citizen and redeem your youthful error, if given a chance."

"I s'pose I might," answered the boy, not very hopefully.

"If you didn't I could inform on you at any time. I suppose you know the law never lets up on murder. One never gets beyond the danger of prosecution."

"Never?"

"Never."

"I believe I'd ruther take my medicine now an' be done with it," said the boy, with a long breath.

"But I will never breathe a whisper in regard to it, if you do nothing more of a criminal character."

"Wal—I'll try it," answered the boy dejectedly.

From that moment Wilton Kishu provided for the crippled young law-breaker. He provided for him liberally, too. All that skill could do for body and brain was done for this vicious foundling, but he was never allowed to forget that his benefactor held his life in his hands. When he left school, Mr. Kishu made him his clerk. He gave him fair wages and was outwardly considerate enough of his feelings; but in a thousand ways he managed almost daily to convey to him a knowledge of the fact that he was under espionage, and that any hour the ax might fall upon his neck. This was not the result of any intended cruelty on the part of the employer, who was really much attached to the singular being whose varied accomplishments had become almost essential to his comfort as well as his prosperity. It was only because Kishu's own wrong made him a coward, and he feared more and more, as the years went by, any connection of his name with the almost forgotten tragedy which had made a happy home desolate.

Out of these conditions had resulted "Goggles." Mr. Kishu was entitled to the credit he not infrequently hinted was his due: he had saved his clerk from a life of crime.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PRODUCT OF EVOLUTION.

MURVALE EASTMAN thought he had cast Lilian Kishu out of his life. Heart and brain had been of late too full for love. Constant care for the good and ills of others had crowded out all thought of self. Day by day, he saw the way opening before him in unexpected places for the sowing of seed which he trusted might yield rich harvests of good. From morning until night, head and hand were busy in devising new plans and in doing new work. For a time he tried to keep the Church and the League apart, to devote certain hours to each; but he soon found that they overlapped and intermingled so that he could not say where one ended and the other began. Both were God's work, each supplemental and necessary to the other. The Church could not do the work of the League; the League had no desire to assume the function of the Church. Sometimes the edges grated a little harshly; some zealous believers feared that the Church was not getting its share of the credit; some sensitive Leaguers feared that the Church was monopolizing all the praise.

This was to be expected. It is the habit of earthly mechanism to run dry and creak at the bearings, no matter whether it is material or organic, made in the shop or forged in the brain, and the chief business of the one having such machinery in charge is to oil the bearings. This is, perhaps, especially true of what may be termed social enginery, whether religious or political, because in this the levers and pulleys, shafts and bearings, are not only more difficult of adjustment than the parts of a material machine, but each one is endowed with individuality and is expected not merely to do its relative part of the work, but to supply some portion of the motive power as well. The ability to run such a machine and run it well, we call executive power. It is the same quality, whether found in pastor or politician. The successful pastor would always have made a successful politician. The intellectual qualities of a good bishop and a great party leader are identical. Both must be watchful of the bearings of a great social machine, and both must be able to apply the proper lubricant the instant friction is developed.

It is this executive quality that guides the world in the march of progress. Invention and administration, the power to adapt means to ends, and the capacity to observe routine and attend to detail, may accompany executive quality, but it is not always nor often that they do. Washington, Lincoln, and Grant were the great executive minds of our history. Yet Washington was without invention or adaptiveness; Lincoln was impatient of routine; and detail was irksome to Grant. Each, however, had in a supreme degree the executive quality which insures successful leadership. Washington remedied troublesome friction by casting the work on another part of the machine; Lincoln, by a matchless skill in the balancing of forces which made one hindrance supply the lubricant that made another harmless; Grant secured harmony by unhesitating removal of the cause of discord. All had their enemies, but no one was ever able to foil them in the great designs they had in charge.

The executive mind is not always pre-eminent in the general esteem. Eloquence, valor, even rashness and impracticability, may often rank above it in popularity. The clamor of false pretense not seldom overshadows the record of actual achievement. The real test of executive ability is the power to subordinate all of the component forces of a man's epoch or environment, no matter how seemingly discordant they may be, and make them contribute each its full quota of strength to a common end. Murvale Eastman's mind was essentially executive in its quality. He led rather than directed. His church seemed to run itself; and the credit for its success was generally given to the membership rather than the pastor. The League developed a half-dozen men of more brilliant and striking qualities; but he kept each one in his own groove, prevented conflict and interference, and secured the unquestioning loyalty and devotion of each to himself. How he did it no one knew. He was himself unconscious both of method and result. His eye was fixed upon the end. No wonder the task of supervision and adaptation had occupied his thought to the exclusion of self; that he had almost forgotten the love he had renounced and the scar it had left upon his heart.

It was only when he saw Lilian walking with Frank Marsh and read, with the instinct not merely of the lover, but of one having an intuitive knowledge of human nature, the language of each gesture and the emotion which showed upon her face, that he realized the truth which would have been patent to his observation long before had he once dreamed of finding in her heart anything but a true response to his own passionate regard. He had not sought to analyze the woman he had loved, and had none of that desire which affects sometimes even brave natures, to possess her unwillingly or in defiance of a stronger inclination on her part. He had given her up because she had made it plain to him that he was not fitted to secure her happiness. So at least he had construed her language and demeanor. Strangely enough, he had not once thought he might suffer when he should see her giving to another the love she had denied to him. Heaven is often merciful in dividing our woes. He saw it all when his eye fell upon them as they turned off the crowded thoroughfare, and he had waited, unable to go away, his eyes riveted upon them until Lilian returned. Instinctively he read the intensity of her emotion, and crossed the street to intercept her at the corner more from a feeling of pity than from any conscious desire to meet her. He felt no rancor, only a tender pity that impelled him still to proffer kindness to the woman to whom he had once hoped to devote all the days of his life; for Murvale Eastman was one of those whose love did not consist in the hope of enjoyment, but found its highest expression in the desire to give happiness to the object of its devotion.

While regretting that Lilian's inclination did not run with his, it did not once occur to him to thwart it. His love could have but one purpose, her happiness. And that happiness—he thought he saw clearly on what it depended. So as she walked by his side and made up her mind that she would submit, not altogether unwillingly, to what she deemed her fate, he was wondering if any obstacle stood in the way of her love for another, and if so, what he could do to remove it. When she entered her father's office, he bent his steps to the sanctum of the editor of the *Breeze*.

Just outside the editor's room he met Frank Marsh. The latter showed some surprise at the rencontre, but saluted him pleasantly as he passed down the stairs.

"Take a seat," said Searle, after the customary greeting. "Excuse me a moment. You may find something to look at there."

He pushed a chair, heaped up with exchanges, toward his visitor as he spoke, and almost before the words were out of his mouth, the managing editor of the *Breeze* was absorbed once more in his work, which had evidently been interrupted before the arrival of his present visitor.

The room Stearns occupied was neither ornate nor pretentious. A great roller-top desk with many pigeon-holes stood open before him. Between him and the window, which almost spanned the room's width, was the chair in which he had ensconced his visitor, with another on which he had thrown the morning's exchanges. There was no other furniture in the room. The managing editor had learned that chairs induce delay, and he did not mean that his visitors should be tempted to sit down. Short stories were the form of literature most pleasing to him, when he had to listen to them, at least. The walls of the room were bare save for some curiously intermingled prints, the portraits of a poet, a politician, a candidate, and above the desk a photograph of the man who had been the editor's first friend, a genius who had wrought his own destruction, but whose likeness, with characteristic pertinacity, Searle kept above his desk.

Murvale Eastman took his seat and watched the hard-faced, gray-eyed man at his work—the most incomprehensible and marvelous task ever conceived of, to the uninitiated—the creation of a great newspaper. He was engaged in the first step of this mysterious undertaking, determining what might go in. Six or eight hours afterward he would determine with a rapidity even more incredible, that still more difficult question, what must come out.

On the desk before him, heaped almost to its top, lay the preliminary reports of his subordinates, suggestions of available matter, and estimates of space. He held a heavy pencil with a blue lead in one end and a red one in the other. With a rapidity quite inconceivable to the beholder, he ran through page after page of the "matter," and indicated in bold, heavy strokes, erasure, condensation, re-working, whatever was to be done to fit it to its place in the next morning's dish of news which was to be served to the readers of the *Breeze*. Men came and went, a ceaseless stream, it seemed to the on-looker. Sometimes there were three or four at once in the narrow room, waiting to ask questions, make suggestions, or receive orders. Still the editor worked on, sometimes pausing to look up, sometimes not removing his eyes from the sheet on which he was engaged, but all the time hearing, determining, directing.

By-and-by the heap before him had almost disappeared. A half-dozen subordinates had received back their work with verbal suggestions to each in regard to it. More than half the pile of "matter" had gone—into the waste-basket; one or two pieces had been laid aside, as if for fuller consideration.

"Well, that is over with," said Stearns at length, rising, stretching his arms, and throwing back his head to relieve that weariness which is sure to follow prolonged and intense mental effort. "Now we can have a little time to ourselves."

He went to the door, sprung the latch, and returning sat down in his office chair, swung it around toward the young minister, whom he regarded with that frank confidence by which men testify the highest esteem for each other.

"You did not read all that pile of manuscript you have gone through with since I came in?" asked Eastman, curiously, but with evident admiration in his tone, of the power to perform the feat he had witnessed.

"No and yes," answered the other with a smile, picking up one of the slips he had thrown aside as if he found it unnatural to talk without something in his hands, "or rather I hardly know whether I did or did not. I know what is in them and have a pretty fair idea what every page and column of to-morrow's issue will contain."

"It does not seem possible that you should have read them all in so short a time."

"I don't know," said the editor. "Men do strange things when they have to; or rather the necessity of accomplishing certain results in a limited time generates a capacity to do what would otherwise be deemed impossible. Of course, I knew a good deal about what was in that pile before I began on it; but I suppose——"

He stooped and took a crumpled sheet from the waste basket.

"Look at that, now," he continued. "Would you say the man who made those marks had read it?"

"Unquestionably," answered Eastman in surprise. "Sentences have been struck out, modifiers eliminated, the order of statement changed, the whole thing metamorphosed, yet left the same."

"Exactly; and, after all, the whole thrown away," laughed Stearns. "Well, I do not know that I paid any more attention to that article than to the others. What you have seen is simply an illustration of the training a daily newspaper gives; and shows why no man can come from another profession and sit safely and successfully in its higher places. It develops in its greatest perfection the faculty of instant decision as to the thing in hand. I saw those mistakes of form—newspaper form, I mean, not necessarily what would be termed literary or grammatical form—and knocked them out as I went along. By the time I had reached the end I concluded the thing was not worth the space it would require, and so 'killed' it without a moment's hesitation."

"But I do not see how you *can* read so fast."

"Nor do I. In fact I am not sure I do *read*, in the sense you use the term. There are scores of men in the profession who can do such work faster than I. When I was in college I was a favorite with a professor who was a noted book-worm. He used to tell me that a persistent and faithful reader nearly always reached the point where he is able to absorb, as it were, a page at a glance. I have often thought this might be true, though I did not believe it then. Certain it is, that where I used to see, or apprehend rather, only word by word and line by line, I now seem to gather in the thought by sentences—several lines at a time, perhaps. I cannot tell how it is done, but a glance or two includes a page. I think this is a frequent experience with persons in such positions."

"You learn to talk and read at the same time, too, I see?"

"Not to any exent," answered Searle. "I no doubt seem to do so; but in reality I can hardly be said to have anything like the duplex capacity which has been claimed for some men both in ancient and modern times. I often continue to read while people talk to me, because I know what they are going to say, or catch it by scraps as they go along. Sometimes, I think the ear catches words and holds them like the wax on the receiving cylinder of the phonograph, until the mind gets leisure to consider them.

In that way, I seem often to know what a reporter or the foreman has been saying for quite a time during which I have been intently engaged with the 'matter' I am examining. Curiously enough, I do not see but that what is done under such circumstances is as good as any of my work."

"And is this, too, common in the profession?"

"I think almost universal."

"Did you ever think anything about the heritability of such qualities—what will be the effect of our universal literary capacity and special literary training on the future, I mean?"

"More than once," answered Searle with enthusiasm. "A printer's child may almost be said to be born 'at the case.' Like all engrossing occupations, the constant exercise of the faculty of reading and writing leaves an ineradicable impress on the offspring. Most of the children of to-day are born with an aptitude for alphabetic forms and verbal symbols which was unheard of fifty years ago. Why should it not be so? The laborer of to-day reads more words in a year than the professional man of a generation ago; and the business or professional man of to-day receives more ideas, from written or printed pages, in a year than his grandfather could have received in all his life. It cannot be otherwise. You will find a lawyer, a banker, or a merchant reading two or three newspapers a day and receiving and answering letters, telegrams, and telephone messages, exceeding in number and variety, every day, the inquiries one in like circumstances would have been called upon to answer in a month or perhaps a year, only one life-time ago."

"We shall have editors, reporters, and the like, born ready-made after a little, then, I suppose," said Eastman with a smile.

"We are not so far from it now as you might think," was the reply. "You know Goggles, of course, Mr. Kishu's private secretary?"

"Mr. Lampson, you mean?" said the minister reprovingly.

"Well, yes," laughed Searle, "if you choose to call him that—it is his company name."

"Is it not his real name?"

"It was not his father's name nor his mother's either, for that matter. But that is of no consequence. His father was one of the most brilliant men that ever lived, a slave of appetite but a genius. At that time—when he was young, I mean—there seems to have been a notion that brilliancy and dissipation were inseparable. Genius appears to have been regarded as a sort of mental distortion which of necessity implied moral obliquity. This was the tone of the epoch of Byron, Keats, and Shelley, whose lives are a sea of blackness from which we regretfully pick out gems of thought which, do what we may, it is hard to dissociate from their origin. Coleridge and De Quincey illustrate another phase of the same idea. Carlyle, the cowardliest of braggarts, with his dog's heart and envenomed tongue, was still another product of this ideal. More than one of our great Americans of the epoch just preceding our civil war illustrate my thought. This idea is still the much-vaunted theory which impels Gallic genius to boast of excesses, and is to some extent the excusatory principle of English and American life. Great wealth and high station are accepted as the evidence of great powers and the excuse for great excesses. I do not know that it is any more fallacious now than heretofore, but we are learning that, after all, it is the healthy mind which does and has always done the best work. Almost everybody now admits that work and the ability to work are the prime essentials of the highest achievement. The journalist of to-day can scarcely acquire even an ephemeral reputation if affected with the infirmities which yesterday deemed almost essential to his success. He may develop them after he has reached the pinnacle of renown, but while he is climbing the ladder he must have a cool head. There are some survivors of the old order; but, as a rule, the journalist of to-day depends for his success upon the fact that he never loses command of all his faculties.

"Lampson's father was one of those remarkable men whom the exigencies of the early years of daily journalism seem to have generated. The *Thunderbolt* feels the impulse of his name and power even yet. He was a man of passion, fire, absorbing vanity, and unrestrained impulse. My life overlapped his but a few years, yet as a boy I remember him when he was in his prime. I was a 'devil' in the office then. What a grand picture of health and strength he was, and how proud of himself! He had two partners, one a weak, genial man who worshiped the brilliant writer and leader, and quietly made up his deficiencies while he sang his praises; the other, a smooth, plausible fellow who managed the business, and—well, left them to look out for themselves.

"No one knows just how it happened, but one day Lampson's father withdrew from the firm and established another daily. He had the most brilliant prospects and the best of backing. What made him fail? One can hardly tell. He was one of those men who supplied by their individual resources the things which an infinitely varied mechanism provides for the journalist of to-day. It was before the era of stenography as a practical art, but he would listen to a speech two hours long, come back to the office, and dash it off, not word for word, it is true, but far better than a mere verbal report, preserving all its excellencies, eliminating its defects, and yet veraciously retaining the speaker's style, reproducing indeed, as no verbal report can, not only the speech, but its effect upon the hearer as well.

"One of the fruits of this man's moral obliquities was that strange creature, 'Goggles.' Of course, he is illegitimate. His mother was—a magnificent beast. She died when the child was a year or two old, and the father procured a family named Lampson to adopt it. They were not much better than the mother. Joe was a notably hard case among the little 'vags' of a low suburb. When he was about twelve or fourteen, something happened to him, and the next that was known of him, Wilton Kishu was his benefactor and—master! The 'old man' set me to finding out what it is that holds them together, when I first took up reporting, but I could never solve the riddle.

"Now what I wanted to say, though I have taken a long while to get to it, is that this man is a born reporter. He will carry three thousand words in his head and hardly miss one in running them off. He is an expert stenographer, it is true, but he hardly needs any aid from symbols. He will sit and dream or scribble verse, during the delivery of a speech, and then run it off verbatim on his type-writer afterward, just as well as if he had followed it with his pencil. He is much more than a reporter, too. He is a writer of peculiar power and a poet—whose verses are never printed. He signs them 'Worsoff the Russian,' because of their weird, pessimistic character and also because, as he grimly says, no Russian ever *thought* himself worse off than he *is*. Not a bad hit at Russian morbidness, eh?"

The two men laughed pleasantly.

"He inherits other qualities from his father, too, does he not?" asked Eastman.

"You mean the opium habit? I don't think so; pain probably, perhaps fear, is the cause of that."

"Fear?"

"Yes; he is mortally afraid of Kishu."

"Why should that be?"

"Give it up!"

"The—other partner's son—young Marsh?" said Eastman suggestively.

"Just like his father—too honorable to succeed, but as true as steel, and not without ability. He is a great favorite in the office, and we shall be sorry to lose him."

"Lose him—how?"

"He has just resigned."

"Going elsewhere?"

"San Francisco."

"I am surprised."

"So was I," said Searle significantly.

"Why is he leaving?"

"Shall I tell you?" asked Searle with a sharp glance at his companion.

"If you please," answered the minister, looking him in the eye.

"He is in love with—with Lilian Kishu."

"Well?"

Eastman's tone was firm, but there was a quiver about his lip.

"He thinks she wishes—feels—that is—he does not think he ought to remain, you see."

The cold-eyed editor was clasping and unclasping his hands in helpless bewilderment as he spoke.

"I understand," said the other, turning his head away and looking steadily out of the window. Presently he added in a low, even voice:

"Tell him he would better—stay."

There was a moment's silence. The minister continued looking out of the window; the editor brushed his hand across his eyes, turned his chair toward the desk, and put a slip of paper in one of the pigeon-holes. Eastman rose and put on his hat, drawing it down so as to hide his eyes. Stearns rose also. The silence seemed unnatural and oppressive in the midst of so much life. They heard the throb of the engine in the basement, the tinkle of the car-bell on the street below.

"You are—sure?" asked Searle wistfully.

"Sure, quite sure," answered the other firmly, looking around with a white, hard face.

Searle reached out his hand and took the other's in a strong, firm clasp. His lips worked tremulously, but uttered no sound. Murvale Eastman went out into the sunshine; the editor looked after him a moment and then turned again to his desk.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC FAME.

How the world hurries in this wonderful age, when decades stand for centuries and ages are crowded into a life-time! While we pause to count the heart's beating, events happen that change the world's history. And the daily press—it chronicles them all—small and great worthy and unworthy, and is a true picture of the time.

So we are wont to say. The statement is but half true, at best. The press chronicles what it deems the most important happenings with a certain accuracy, but who shall verify its judgment as to relative importance? And as to what lies beneath—why events come to pass, what is the motor which moves humanity, and why men and women think and do this or that—of these things, alas! it takes little note; no more than history, which is always the leanest part of truth, concerned chiefly with happenings and ignoring causes, save those that lie upon the surface. Yet, "why" is infinitely greater than "what" as an element of life. "What" is done is but the wrinkled and empty skin of truth; "why," an infinite series of causations, the evolution of motives from which facts result. A knowledge of this endless chain of sequences is necessary to fill out the empty husk and enable the world to comprehend the truth of yesterday's experience. This is why fiction outranks history as a truth-teller, and teaches lessons of wisdom which philosophy strives in vain without its aid to impress upon the human mind. It is the privilege of the novelist, not merely to relate the sequence of events, but to uncover the heart and reveal the motives of actors in the infinite drama of life.

Little did the world guess the true significance of a few paragraphs which appeared in the editorial columns of the *Breeze* at various times during a few weeks, as a part of the drama of thought and progress enacted in and about the Church of the Golden Lilies. Few hearts had any clew to their real import, and each of those who did was burdened with uncertainty in regard to what others might have revealed.

EDITORIAL EXTRACT NO. 1.

The offer of ten thousand dollars reward for an opal of peculiar character which has appeared in our advertising columns for several days is withdrawn, and the parties making it authorize the statement that they not only have the stone in their possession, but have abundant proof as to whose possession it has been in during every moment for the last two hundred years except one single day. During that time there was a change of possession, the real character of which has not yet been determined, but cannot long be delayed. No better evidence of the value of advertising could be imagined than this; it not only discovered the gem, but revealed every link in its history. What the life-drama connected with it is we know not, but we fancy the public has not yet heard the last of this fateful gem.

EDITORIAL EXTRACT NO. 2.

The action brought some time ago against the city for the recovery of Garden Square and other property embraced in the will of the celebrated patriot and scientist, Daniel Ximenes Valentine, was yesterday determined in favor of the plaintiff, Mr. Jonas Underwood, by adjustment. There has been from the first no question as to Mr. Underwood's right of recovery. The proof of descent from the donor was, unfortunately for the city, quite as clear as the evidence that the conditions of the grant had been violated. The press of the city has repeatedly called attention to this violation by which a highly remunerative property as well as one of the finest parks in the city has been forfeited. A considerable sum was saved to the city by the terms of the compromise, and it is hoped that inducements will be offered sufficient to secure the continuance of this unique park. Its value for building purposes is, however, immense, as it is perhaps, all things considered, the best location in the city. The city ought to secure it even if part of it is used for some kind of a public building.

It is a singular fact that the opal spoken of in these columns a few days ago was an heirloom in the family of Daniel Ximenes Valentine, who were Jewish Christians of Valladolid in the fifteenth century and believed to have been akin to Abrabamel, who was descended from the House of David, and so bravely withstood the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada two days before Columbus sailed to discover a new world which has been indeed a city of refuge to the persecuted children of Israel. The stone is believed to have belonged to a Jewish Christian family in the first century; such, indeed is the tradition. The work upon it is undoubtedly Roman, and it was presumably intended as a religious symbol. Afterward the letters appear to have been taken as family initials, perhaps to avoid persecution. This seems to be the more probable, as for many generations the eldest son of the main line bore the name Daniel Ximenes. A full description of the jewel and its case was found among the papers of the great scientist, which were examined on an order of the court obtained for that purpose. It seems there had been some misunderstanding between him and his daughter, who had married against his wishes, so he left her by his will only the ichthus. Either she was unaware of its contents, or she failed to convey the knowledge to her descendants, since it was only just before its loss, a score of years ago, that the heir discovered the real value of the trinket. Even then he did not know that it would prove able to open Fortunatus' box for him.

A curious thing about it is that Mr. Metziger, the lawyer in the case, found in the course of its preparation that his own family, which came to this city from Frankfort about the time that the father of Daniel Ximenes Valentine arrived from the Netherlands, were a branch of the same stock. The records of this family, which are very complete, show that puzzling change of names which was so frequent and apparently unaccountable in the Middle Ages. The reasons for these changes were sometimes religious, sometimes financial, and at others seem to have been purely fanciful. Such changes render the tracing of relationships among the common classes a task of such difficulty that even the utmost care on the part of the Hebrew genealogist has not been able to overcome it. But for this gem, the kinship between the two families would never have been suspected. But gems are immortal, and the history of this one reaches back to a time beyond that to which any family of Western Europe can authentically trace its origin.

EDITORIAL EXTRACT NO. 3.

The action begun by Mr. Wilton Kishu against the Trustees of the Church of the Golden Lilies for infraction of conditions on which the site was donated, has given rise to an amount of litigation he probably little expected when the writ was issued. Twenty-seven suits have been brought by Mr. Underwood, one of the parties sought to be ejected, against the present occupants of what was once known as the Flat-iron Tract—now one of the most fashionable parts of the city. As the property was all bought from Mr. Kishu, who warranted the title, and has been built up with the most costly residences, that gentleman will either have to defend the title or make good the loss which those deriving title through him may suffer. That he can do the former seems altogether improbable, as the plaintiff's title is the same as that recently admitted to be incontestable in several suits against the city. Several actions for damages against Mr. Kishu have already been instituted by parties who fear that he may be unable to meet all the claims for which he may be held liable. Mr. Kishu is a very wealthy man, but it is generally admitted that if these cases should be decided against him, it is hardly probable that he could more than meet his obligations. The Flat-iron Tract was the basis of his fortune. He bought it of the city for a nominal sum, taking a quit-claim deed, and sold at an immense advance, giving a warranty, supposing the family of Valentine to be extinct. It is said that the transaction yielded him fully half a million, but the property is now worth as many millions as he paid thousands for it. Mr. Underwood, as is well known, was recently a driver on the Belt and Cross-Cut Line, and in very straitened circumstances. The result of the pending actions may very possibly be to reverse the financial status of the two men. Nothing could more clearly show the unhealthfulness of modern conditions and ideals. Instead of putting a fair competence within the reach of all, and inducing every one to strive for its attainment, it spurs on the ambitious man to take great risks, to play for great stakes, as we term it, making what is called business a game of chance rather than the reward of close application or individual merit.

While very many would regret such disaster to an eminent and public-spirited citizen like Mr. Kishu, yet it cannot be denied that many more, perhaps a majority, will regard it as a bit of gambler's luck, and looking back to the transaction on which his fortune was largely built, will simply say that he played for big money and lost. Of course, Mr. Kishu would not take such risks now—he understands the danger too well—but at that time he was anxious to be rich, and the speculation in which he embarked offered an opportunity to amass a fortune by one daring stroke. We trust that some compromise may be made which will avoid such a calamity, by dividing the loss between the parties in interest ; but we must confess that the spirit recently displayed by Mr. Kishu toward the plaintiff in these suits does not give much room for hope of an amicable adjustment.

To this latter paragraph the *Thunderbolt* stoutly rejoined:

EDITORIAL EXTRACT NO. 4.

Our esteemed contemporary the *Breeze* is altogether "too previous" in its pretense of sympathy for Mr. Kishu in a certain contingency which it chooses to intimate may result from the suits recently brought against the owners of certain property in the city. Such a result is, in the first place, not at all probable. The plaintiff in these actions is not contending with the city now, but with a man who will defend his rights to the last moment and by all lawful means. We would remind our esteemed contemporary that Wilton Kishu is not only a self-made man, but one who is not easily frightened by the threats of an unknown pretender who has had the luck to spring at the eleventh hour from poverty to affluence. We must ask our windy neighbor to reserve its sympathy for those who need it, and Mr. Kishu is not likely soon to be one of the recipients of its hypocritical condolence. As for the suits themselves, the editor of the *Breeze* will never live to see judgments entered in one of them against Mr. Kishu. Of that much we are able to assure him with the utmost confidence.

These were brave words, and public opinion was divided between Valentine's heirs, who had so long been deprived of their rights under the ancestor's will, and Wilton Kishu, who had nerve enough to take the chances and make a fortune out of the unsightly tract which had so long obstructed the city's development.

Wilton Kishu took a strange interest in these excerpts, which he cut out and read over and over again, as if he hoped to find in them, and the advertisements he had preserved, some clew that would relieve him from the dangers that impended. They had already revealed to him a mysterious connection between his fortune and his crime. His greed had been the instrument of his own punishment. If he had not robbed the child whom chance threw in his way, there was little probability that the Valentine heirs would ever have been discovered. If he had restored her instead of yielding to his wife's silly threats, he would have earned their gratitude instead of their hate. He saw it all now. This man who was intrenched within the very walls of the Golden Lilies was his mortal enemy, and was bound to strip him, not only of his wealth, but of his good name. All the foundations of his pride were being surely sapped.

Yet he would not yield. To do so would be only to invite the fate he dreaded. They could not fasten any wrong upon him. At best it would be mere suspicion. Was he sure of this? The *Breeze* stated that they were able to account for the stone for two hundred years "except *one day*." One day! It had been in his possession one day; the next he had pledged it for a loan. A month after it had returned to his possession. Did his enemy know all this?

His heart almost ceased its pulsations at the thought. Was the statement true, or was it mere bluff? How could they have learned it? The man with whom he had pledged it lived in another city. Kishu had given him his true name. It had not been his purpose to do so, but he could secure the advance he desired in no other way. The note for which it had been pledged as a collateral was signed with his name also. He had told the party truly why it was not negotiated at home—that he did not wish to strain his credit nor have it known that he was engaged in speculative enterprises. The man had hesitated, as if he feared the gem might not be readily convertible for the amount required, and had finally yielded only on condition that he should receive a farther sum from the projected enterprise should it prove successful.

And this obligation Kishu had faithfully performed. The Jew had got heavy interest—almost cent. per cent. for thirty days' use of fifteen hundred dollars; for that was all Kishu had received for his promise to pay two thousand. Had the lender revealed the facts of this transaction? It did not seem probable. It was a long time ago. It was not likely that he would remember every such transaction or every gem that passed through his hands. He had not shown him the case—the *ichthus*, which he had been tempted so often to destroy, and wondered now why he had not. He had a fear that this cheap toy would prove his undoing yet. Somehow he had not dared to destroy it. He thought of it now with superstitious dread. It was an emblem of the true faith in the days when miracles were wrought. It had been in the catacombs, perhaps. It was possible that the hands of martyrs had touched it. Perhaps the eyes of those who had seen the Holiest had rested on it. He shivered with dread as he thought of the mystic possibilities which might attach to such a consecrated emblem.

But what was it that had been said about a cast of the jewel being in existence? Had the Jew taken a cast? It seemed more than likely, though he had never thought of it before. The stone was a valuable one, and he had heard of such a custom with the dealers in such wares. With the information this man could give, they would indeed be able to trace it to his hands and presumptively, at least, account for its possession except for the one day that elapsed between the time it left the little girl's hand

and the hour he proffered it as security for a loan. Something was said, too, about a kinsman of Metziger having had the stone. The man from whom he made the loan was a Jew. So was Metziger, it seemed, by descent, though his family had so long ago abandoned the synagogue that nobody thought of them as such. He himself had always supposed that they were descended from the old Dutch families or the German sectaries who had sought refuge in the colony in its early day. He remembered that the man's name was Messinger—Joseph Messinger. Was this the relative referred to? The name was something like Metziger. He remembered that it was spelled with an "i," and the man gave the "g" its hard sound; this increased the resemblance. He thought, on the whole, this must be the fact.

So they had traced it down to "one day"—but they knew nothing of that day; they *could* know nothing of that. Stop! Where was Lampson? He had not gone to Bermuda; that much he had learned. He had been seen to enter Metziger's office. Since then he had disappeared. But Metziger knew where he was. Of that there was no doubt. What if Lampson had tried to ease his conscience by confession? This would bring the matter nearer home.

But how much did Lampson know? He might *suspect* a great deal, but how much did he *know?* Simply that Wilton Kishu had found the child which he afterward stole, took it from the street into his carriage, and had tried to make him surrender it. That was all. He could not testify that the child had not fallen into the river nor tell how the gem had come into the possession of the benefactor he had betrayed. Ah! that "one day" that lay between him and the jewel which had so nearly worked his ruin was yet an insuperable obstacle in the path of his enemies. They might come very near to him with plausible suspicion, but they could never reach him with proof. And against suspicion he had the buckler of good repute. Who would dare impugn the character of Wilton Kishu on mere suspicion?

So he faced the enemy bravely, even confidently. As to the suit—there is always a chance that some link in the chain of evidence, some essential formality of a valid claim, may be lacking, or that a claimant may sometimes grow weary of hope deferred and compound his demand. The prospect was not very good for success, but he could lose nothing by contesting. He determined, therefore, that he would fight—fight until the last moment. And then? Well, it would be time enough to consider what he would do afterward, when he had been driven from the shelter of the last stronghold the law has created for the stubborn defender of personal right.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

UNCOVERING A CRATER.

TRUE to his instincts, Murvale Eastman had written to his former *fiancée* that he had undertaken to trace the history of the setting in the ring she had discarded, explaining the reason of this inquiry, and cordially expressing his entire confidence that Mr. Kishu was unaware of the relation the stone bore to the tragedy in the life of Jonas Underwood and his wife. He would like to know anything she or her father might see fit to tell him in regard to its possession. It was no doubt a long and probably untraceable road from the finger of Lilian Kishu back to the neck of the lost child, but the unexpected discovery of the strangely-marked gem had given the father hope—a hope which no pains upon his part would be spared to justify. The highest legal and detective ability would at once be put at work upon the case. She must not be surprised at anything that might be done, but rest assured that no harm was intended her or those dear to her.

Up to this moment no one had more than the faintest suspicion that Wilton Kishu's relation to the lost gem was in any degree blameworthy. His daughter, with that peculiar instinct which seemed to be inherent with the child of the successful speculator, at once ran back in her mind to the time when it was lost. She knew that her father was then far from rich, and she had heard vague hints from her mother of sorrowful days preceding her own birth. She guessed with foreboding terror that her father—the father whom she loved so devotedly—might have come into possession of the fatal gem in some discreditable manner—might perhaps have bought it of the thief, having good reason to believe it had been stolen. She did not feel any great horror on account of the act itself; it seemed to her only a venial, almost excusable wrong, but she knew that it was a crime and that its heinousness would be enhanced in popular thought by the sufferings of those from whom it had been stolen. She greatly dreaded, therefore, the effect of its discovery on her father's good name.

It was after reading this letter that she had made up her mind to marry Murvale Eastman. His conduct since she had discarded him had both surprised and annoyed her. He had uttered no reproaches, had not sought to be reinstated, and in the letter before her had made no allusion to their former relation. Strangely enough, she felt as if it was she who had been discarded rather than her lover. Everything that had occurred had increased her admiration of the man, and she had inherited enough of her father's qualities to appreciate the fact that it would be a notable achievement to reconcile her father and her lover, now become his most dangerous enemy, and restore the former to his old place in the Church of the Golden Lilies, make amends to the father and mother of the child they had so mysteriously lost, and at the same time screen her father from any blame—if blame there were—in connection with the matter, at the first. This brilliant *coup* she determined to effect by marrying the young divine already grown famous for what he had done and dared to attempt.

But what of poor Frank Marsh, of his love for her and her fondness for him? Of course it would be hard for him, but she would be his good fairy, too, and put him in the way of acquiring a fortune. He would soon forget his fancy for her. It gave her heart a sore twinge to think so, but she did not doubt the fact.

Despite her innocence, Lilian Kishu was by no means unsophisticated. Her views of the world had not been restricted. She reflected quite unconsciously both her father's pessimism and her mother's distrust. She believed in love of the old-fashioned, romantic sort, as a thing very pleasant to play at in the courting days, but she fully accepted the more exalted and reasonable view of later times which is so bluntly expressed by the novelist, Tolstoi, who has recently been elevated to the level of teacher, moralist, and prophet, when he declares that "love of the passionate, romantic sort is not to be expected or even desired in marriage." She accepted the new philosophy of "realistic" marriage—that husband and wife should have a mutual respect for each other, but by all means avoid anything approaching a romantic passion, as certain to bring disappointment and unhappiness. With the great high-priest of the new Muscovite dispensation, she was ready to say: "Love is necessarily changeful; respect is permanent. Love is the product of a sort of frenzy; respect the result of conviction."

She was a product of her time, a creature of inheritance and environment. She was not avaricious, because she had enough; but without thinking she believed in modern notions and the modern theories of life and society. She did not deny to herself that she loved Frank Marsh and that she did not love Murvale Eastman. She had tried to love him but could not. Even while she was in his one passionate embrace the face of her handsome playmate had come between, and she had broken from his clasp with a thrill of repugnance, almost hatred, for him and for herself. Yet she respected and esteemed Murvale Eastman; was proud of his manhood, and would be glad to wear his name and share the triumphs she was sure he would achieve. She drew a sheet of paper near her and wrote the name to see how it would look: "Mrs. Murvale Eastman." She did not blush, as she read the syllables and tried them to see how they would become the mouth and fill the ear. Why should she? There was nothing discreditable in the act, and she was "not a milkmaid." The day of romantic, credulous, love-lorn maidens has gone by. She had no desire that Frank Marsh should cease to love her—rather wished, indeed, that he should not. He was a charming gallant. It would be nice to flirt with him after she was married. There was no harm in that, and Murvale was too sensible to be jealous. So she decided she would marry Murvale Eastman, that she would keep track of the efforts being made to trace the jewel, that she would cultivate the Underwoods, screen her father, and watch over the interests of Frank Marsh.

The time was when a girl of the intelligence and position of Lilian Kishu would have been both ashamed and afraid to juggle with her heart in this manner; but the world has moved since then, and the ideal woman has changed with the times. Once, love was the most serious thing in life, and marriage its blissful consummation. Both were holy things, not to be thought of but in connection with each other; yet now we have learned that love is but a pastime, a fever of the blood; and marriage a matter of business, "an important social convention founded on reason rather than individual atraction." And Lilian Kishu filled this ideal. She would die, if need were, to save her father from dishonor; but was not called upon to sacrifice for love's sake either her pride or her position. The rôle suited her. She had no fancy for an unimportant part in the drama of life, and she thought she would like nothing so well as to make such strong men as Wilton Kishu and Murvale Eastman pull together, despite their mutual unlikeness. It was a silly notion, but even "the girl of the period" will dream dreams, and this was Lilian Kishu's dream.

Her first step in the fulfillment of her purpose was to try and find out from her mother anything she might know in regard to the matter. That worthy woman was as wax in her daughter's hands whenever the child of Wilton Kishu sought to exercise her inherited power of management. Before a day had passed, Lilian heard a tearful account of her father's one unforgiven wrong, from the mother's point of view. Without stopping to controvert the jealousy which years had ripened into a wrong all the more bitter because she had daily declared it to be forgiven, Lilian inquired about the child who had been made the victim of the exasperated wife's resentment.

"I don't know what ever became of it," answered the mother, her eyes wet with tears of humiliation and bitterness. "I didn't want to know. I took it to a friend, one that had been a friend of my girlhood, and told her—I can't tell you what I told her, Lilian. It wasn't the truth. I couldn't tell such a truth of—of my husband. Perhaps what I did tell wasn't any more creditable, but it didn't reflect on him, anyhow. It didn't seem so bad to reflect on one's own kin—especially as it wasn't true. It couldn't hurt your uncle, either—seeing he was dead."

"I understand," said the daughter.

"Well, she took the—the child," said the woman bitterly, hurrying along in her story. "She took it and went off West. I gave her five hundred dollars; she was poor, you see, and I put money in the bank to pay her a good sum every year until it was of age. I was to pay for the schooling too—it was to be well educated. I didn't want the innocent child to suffer on account of—of others, you know."

"Of course," assented Lilian.

"As I said, Sally Weeks—that was the woman's name—went West, and married in less than a year after; the effect of a little money, I s'pose. She was honest, though, and wrote me about it beforehand. She proposed to keep the child if I was willing, and give it her husband's name. I told her I didn't care what she called the child, or what she did with her, as long as she took good care of her and gave her a fair show. As it happened, I never learned her husband's name. She always wrote to me in her old name, and I sent the money to the bank where I first put it to be deposited to her account. I don't know whether they ever knew that she was married. She had no children of her own and became very fond of this one. But wickedness can't be hid. The sin of the father is always visited upon the children. She wrote me all about sending her to school, and how proud they were of her, and once she sent me her photograph. But I burned her letters as soon as I read them—all but one. That was the last. I cut off the address and left it where your father would see it. There was no name to it, only her initials. I thought he ought to know about it."

The woman spoke with bitter austerity.

"The child is dead, then?" asked Lilian with some show of sorrow, though experiencing a sense of relief.

"Dead?" repeated her mother with angry vehemence. "It would be well for her and Wilton Kishu too, if she were. She couldn't have been more than sixteen or seventeen when she ran away!" said Mrs. Kishu in low, horrified tones. "Lilian," she continued solemnly, "that is one reason I have always wanted to live abroad. I can't sleep, with thinking of that girl. Suppose she should come and claim relationship!"

"You say she was good-looking," said Lilian lightly.

"A great, black-eyed, bold-faced huzzy! That's what her picture showed her," said the angry woman. "I'd like to know what her mother was like—some low-down servant girl, I suppose!"

"And handsome—the girl, I mean?"

"I suppose she would be called so. She'll come yet. Wilton Kishu hasn't heard the last of that girl!"

"Wouldn't that be nice?" said Lilian, artlessly.

"What do you mean, child?"

"Why, we would make such nice foils for each other."

"For each other?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Do you think I would let her come under this roof?"

"You wouldn't make a scandal, I hope, mamma?"

"Do you see that?" She held a little vial toward her daughter. "I told your father, then, I'd take it if he ever looked at the mother again or tried to find the child, *and I will!* The day he finds that child, that very day—I'll—I'll do it. I ain't going to sit still as so many rich men's wives do and have my husband raising three or four families like a Mormon! And you may as well understand it, too. I don't object to his giving her money, if she needs it, but nothing more. And as to her coming here—I should think you'd be ashamed, Lilian, after such disgraceful conduct!"

"I don't see what disgrace there is in running away. I suppose they made her work too hard."

"But she didn't work at all. She was at school, and ran away with a gambler!"

"I'm sure that's nothing against her. Why, you want me to marry one—one who can't pay his losses either. I hope hers had better luck."

"But she wasn't even married!"

"So much the better for her. She could dismiss him when she chose, then. You are sure she wasn't married?"

"I know nothing about it except Sally Weeks's last letter. I never heard of her afterward."

"Have you got that letter, mamma?" asked Lilian, after a moment's silence.

The mother nodded affirmatively.

"Won't you let me have it?"

"Why should you want it?"

"I am afraid, mother, that your jealousy led you to do a great wrong which may make us a great deal of trouble."

She went and laid her hand on her mother's gray head as she spoke.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Kishu, starting up in fear. "Have you heard anything, Lilian? Oh, what a pity we did not go abroad before!"

"I have heard nothing, mother, but I am sure you are wrong. Won't you let me have the letter? It may not yet be too late to remedy the evil."

"I suppose I might as well," said the mother, yielding as she always did yield to her daughter's wishes, no matter how vehemently she might oppose them at first. She went to her desk and took a letter out of one of those drawers which are called "concealed," simply because they are inconvenient, handed it to her daughter and, sitting down, began to weep.

When Lilian had read the letter through carefully, her mother looked up and said tearfully:

"Do you think I was wrong — quite wrong, Lily? From the start, I mean?"

"I have no doubt of it, and think you will soon see it so, yourself."

"I am sure I hope so, though it would be too good to believe," said the weeping woman, smiling through her tears. She was thinking of the husband she had wronged, not of the child whose life had been blighted, or the parents whose hearts had been wrung.

"Do you know, Lilian," she continued, "I would give half we are worth to believe that—that I had made a mistake."

The daughter wondered if this would not help her bear the loss her folly had entailed. Was it her mother's folly or her father's fault which the avenger Time was punishing so relentlessly?

CHAPTER XL.

TRUSTEES OF DIVINE PURPOSE.

THE regular meeting of the Ministerial Association of which Murvale Eastman was a member occurred just when the affairs of Wilton Kishu were at their worst. For the first time in many years he was not present to listen to its deliberations. His absence was remarked with universal regret, for he was not only the most widely known, but one of the most highly esteemed members of the denomination, to whose interests he was devoted. The differences between him and the pastor and Church of the Golden Lilies were greatly deplored and very generally discussed by the audience which had gathered under a general belief that in some way or other the relations of that church to the league of Christian Socialists would be brought to the attention of the Association. This idea seemed to have got abroad very generally, and the newspapers of the city were in consequence very fully represented by experienced and reliable reporters.

A cleaner, brighter, more alert, and courageous-looking body of men than the two-score members of this Ministerial Association, who occupied the front seats on each side of the middle aisle of the church in which it met, could hardly be found betwixt the two oceans which bound our land of many wonders. There was, perhaps, a somewhat marked predominance of young men. Until recently, mature years have generally been regarded as almost a *sine qua non* of eminence in the Church. Of late, however, the young Timothys have been driving the older laborers of the vineyard into retirement and obscurity at a tremendous rate. Every young divine, like every well-bred colt, is looked upon as a possible "phenomenon;" while the man of middle age is supposed to have already done his best, and the church which calls him expects that he will steadily deteriorate upon its hands, and perhaps at last leave an ill-provided family appealing unpleasantly to their charity, just when they are in need of all their resources to secure a new "attraction." There were few gray hairs in the Association, therefore, though there were some bald heads. The members evidently faced the future confidently rather than the past boastfully. Heartiness rather than dignity marked their greeting of each other, and the occupants of the pews shared in their salutations quite as freely as their ministerial associates.

While the audience was collecting the church presented that gay and sparkling appearance which only an American audience thoroughly at its ease ever offers to the beholder's gaze. Well-dressed ladies, with bright, refined faces greatly predominated, interspersed with middle-aged men. Except the ministers there were few young men in the audience, and there was a similar dearth of young women. It was evident, at a glance, that the time had passed when the family group merged almost insensibly into the Church and all the members felt an equal interest in its prosperity. To-day gives leisure only to those in life's decline to waste the golden work-day hours in listening to the plans that may be evolved for promoting the prosperity of Zion.

The were some among these servants of the Most High upon whose faces time had set the seal of failure. Some of these tried to carry it off jauntily, but failed sadly in the attempt. No man can see himself sinking farther and farther below the level of professional distinction to which every worthy man at some time in his life aspires, without feeling it—least of all a minister. To some this state of things had brought resignation; to others discontent. These, for the most part, sat quietly in their places waiting for the meeting to open, some talking with each other, some sitting apart silent and reserved.

Of these latter was Dr. Phue. He had taken a prominent seat near the front, his eye burning with unwonted fire and his pale cheek showing the delicate glow of reawakened hope. His hour had come; the hour for which he had waited so long when he could show himself the champion of the Church, the defender of the Faith! Clean-shaven, erect, self-important, and severe, he sat at the end of the pew next the aisle, waiting impatiently for the moment when the lists should be opened and he should put lance in rest, and slay the foe who threatened destruction to the Church he loved! Dear, simple-hearted, pure-souled, blind-eyed survivor of a past glorious in purpose, but as unfitted for to-day's conflicts as the Knight of the Rueful Countenance to win distinction on a battle-field where arms of precision and smokeless powder are the implements of strife!

The tide of mutual greeting flowed past him, rather than bore him along with it. Not that any of the brethren were neglectful or that any regarded him with indifference. Though his foibles were well understood, all respected the sincerity and learning of the simple-minded man whose thought was so sadly out of harmony with that of the day in which he lived.

His lips worked tremulously, his false teeth showing in unnatural whiteness between their thin edges as he nibbled them with nervous unconsciousness while he conned over and over the words of his projected discourse. His linen, frayed though it might be, was scrupulously white. The tie beneath his smooth-shaved chin—so squarely tied that each bow extended exactly the width of the tie from the overlapping band—was of the most pellucid lawn. His hands, white and shrunken, were those of the scholar, and despite some callous marks of toil on the palms, were faultlessly kept as became a careful servant of the Master. His clothes—is there anything more pathetic than the ministerial garb when time has touched the seams and the tooth of poverty has gnawed little indentations on the exposed edges! What a story it tells of pride and want and trusting hope, struggling with inevitable decadence!

He placed his well-worn silk hat on the seat beside him and deposited in it a formidable roll of manuscript. Taking from his pocket a spotless handkerchief, he slowly unfolded it and dropped it, with seeming carelessness, beside the manuscript in the hat so as effectually to conceal the soiled lining. Then he waited, smoothing now and then the scanty hair upon his crown with his white fingers, his thin lips twitching and his blue eyes moving restlessly under the long straggling brows. He was supremely happy! The burden of chagrin and failure he had carried so long had been lifted from his heart! His time had come—the hour for which he had lived and toiled and studied and dreamed—the hour when as God's chosen instrument he should bruise the head of error and deliver the Church from peril!

Murvale Eastman was among the last to arrive. There was first a hush and then a continuous murmur of comment as he walked down the aisle and laid his overcoat across the back of the seat in front of Dr. Phue. He greeted him courteously, sat down and sought to enter into conversation, but the elder man was too self-absorbed to talk, especially with the man he was about to attack. He was no hypocrite. He meant to hale Murvale Eastman out of his pulpit if voice and pen could accomplish it, and though he had no personal ill-will for him, he would not seem to make a display of cordiality toward him. So Murvale sauntered off to speak to other friends; the audience watched his motions curiously, and Dr. Phue's eyes followed him with exultant anticipation.

The meeting was called to order; a chapter of the Holy Word was read; a hymn was sung, and the congregation bowed in prayer. Dr. Phue tried to listen with scrupulous attention, but do what he would his mind would wander to the triumph he was about to achieve. Hardly were the opening exercises concluded when he was on his feet, manuscript in hand, his black-framed *pince-nez* close gripped in his upraised fingers:

"Mr. Chairman!"

His thin quavering voice was tremulous with eagerness.

"If Dr. Phue will delay a little, there are some communications to be read."

The chairman nodded to the secretary. The scribe rose and read:

"*To the members of the Ministers' Association of*——

"DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:—"For reasons which seem to me good and sufficient, I have decided to terminate a relation which I trust may some time be resumed with pleasure and advantage, and hereby notify you that I have withdrawn from the membership of the Association. With sincerest fraternal regard, I remain

"Your fellow-servant,

"MURVALE EASTMAN."

Before the surprised and confounded Dr. Phue had time to catch his breath, an alert young member was on his feet and moved the acceptance of the resignation.

"But, Mr. Chairman, I object!" exclaimed the venerable champion of a nicely squared belief "I object!"

His voice rang shrill and angry through the church. The inquisitor was afraid his intended victim might escape. The audience waited with breathless attention lest they should lose a single word.

"The motion is out of order," said the chairman quietly, "or, rather, it is unnecessary. Brother Eastman required the votes of a majority of this body to become a member of it, but he has a perfect right to terminate that relation whenever he sees fit to do so. Having exercised that right and voluntarily withdrawn, he is no longer a member of this body."

A look of satisfaction stole over the faces of the members of the Association at this decision. Heresy-hunting has become especially unpopular among those who by the publicity of their utterances are most liable to become the victims of the infallible believer's zeal.

"But, Mr. Chairman," persisted Dr. Phue, with unmistakable warmth, "it is against all rule and precedent, both in the Church and among all voluntary associations, of every sort and character, to permit a member to resign when there are charges pending against him. In that case, it is the universal rule and practice that a member can resign only by leave of the association."

"Are there any charges against Brother Eastman on file?" asked the chairman of the secretary.

"None," was the reply.

"Here are the charges, sir," said Dr. Phue, holding up his manuscript. He had caught up his handkerchief with it, and waved it back and forth with the written sheets like a flag of truce tied to a bayonet. "I have them, sir; they are here ready to be filed. I offer them now. More than one member of this Association knew that I intended to offer them at this meeting. Brother Eastman himself knew it; and I charge him, here and now, with having withdrawn from this Association in order to avoid an inquiry in regard to his orthodoxy—the conformity of his teachings to the accepted standards of the Church. He dare not deny it."

Dr. Phue sat down, his eyes flashing, his hands trembling, and his smooth crown showing the flush of excitement that burned upon his face through the straggling locks so carefully combed across the glistening expanse. All eyes were turned on Murvale Eastman. He rose slowly and without any show of excitement said:

"Mr. Chairman and Brethren, have I leave to make a brief statement?"

The chairman bowed assent.

He continued:

"It is quite true, as Brother Phue has stated, that I did know of his intention to propose at this meeting the inquiry he alludes to, and also true that I withdrew from this Association to avoid that inquiry. I will say further that whenever it becomes the deliberate conviction of any organized body of my brethren in the ministry that such an inquiry is necessary or desirable, I will resign my credentials as a Christian minister, and if they shall deem it needful to pursue such inquiry further, I will withdraw from membership with the Church rather than become a party to such a proceeding. I have long since determined never to appear before any body of men as respondent to a charge of dissent, believing such inquiries, whatever their result, to be harmful to the Master's cause, and being fully determined not to allow any pride of opinion to make me a stumbling-block, even though I may be unable to be of service to, that cause. I have learned that 'neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father' and am daily led to see more clearly that the Church has no monopoly of Christian work and no exclusive control of Christian faith. There is enough to do outside the pale of her activities, and one needs not the Church's approval to secure him entrance at the strait gate. The Church has a right to prescribe its own standards of faith if it chooses, but only personal pride or sheer self-interest, as it seems to me, can induce any one to enter into a contest to decide whether those standards fit his faith or not.

"Charges affecting my moral character or Christian deportment I shall always be ready to meet; those affecting only the correctness of my religious views I shall always avoid. The Church would better dispense with my services and I would much better be bereft of her consolations, than engage in a soul-blighting controversy with her as to whether my faith exactly conforms to her standards or her standards exactly measure the limits of my faith."

There was a murmur of approval as the young minister sat down.

"Mr. Chairman," exclaimed the excited prosecutor, "the document which I hold in my hand embraces a charge of the gravest sort against the moral character of Rev.

Murvale Eastman as a Christian and a minister. Will the gentleman try to dodge that charge also?"

Murvale Eastman turned and looked sharply at his assailant as this statement was made. There was a moment of the most profound silence. When he rose to reply his face was pale, but his manner was calm and unimpassioned.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I did not suppose that I should ever be called upon to listen to such a statement, but we all know Dr. Phue too well to suppose that he would make such a charge without a profound belief in its truth. I therefore request that the brethren of this Association will listen to such charge here and now, and decide whether it is worthy of farther consideration. I make this as a personal request, and pledge myself, if any such charge can be sustained, to relinquish at once and forever my place in the ranks of the ministery."

With some hesitancy the Association decided to comply with this request, and Dr. Phue was invited to state what charges he desired to make affecting the moral character of the pastor of the Golden Lilies.

Under this permission the self-absorbed prosecutor endeavored to read the whole array of charges he had formulated in regard to the teachings and opinions of Murvale Eastman in connection with the organization of the League of Christian Socialists. Not being allowed to do this he proceeded, not without some display of anger, to read the twelfth and last charge in his formidable indictment:

XII.—*Conduct unbecoming a Christian and a minister.*

1. Publishing and uttering falsehood. Specification: That on the day and at the time named in the foregoing specifications, to wit, on the occasion of the organization of said League, the said Murvale

Eastman in the course of his remarks said: "In conclusion, I beg to call your attention to the sentiment contained in the following beautiful lines from the Russian of Worsoff, entitled 'Truth.'" And thereupon the said Eastman repeated the following stanzas:

Dr. Phue here read the lines which the reader has seen, and continued:

"The said Eastman well knowing that said lines were not from the Russian, were not written by said pretended poet Worsoff, and that no such poet is in existence or ever has existed, and by such statement did utter and publish, knowingly and purposely, a falsehood, to the scandal of the Church and in violation of the teaching and commandment of Christ."

When Dr. Phue had finished reading this he looked solemnly around upon the congregation, and turning to the chairman said:

"That, sir, is the charge."

"Is that all?" asked the moderator, with a smile.

"All?" said the chief inquisitor haughtily. "Is it not enough? A lie is a lie, sir, whether it concerns some silly verses or the life of a fellow-man. I stand ready to prove every word of that specification. I have here the report of that meeting, a verbatim report, sir, by one of the most skillful stenographers of the country, Mr. Joseph Lampson. I presume no one will question either his accuracy or ability. I am not able to verify it by his oath, but the entire report is in his handwriting, and I presume Mr. Eastman will not require proof of that, or pretend that he took these lines from the works of any Russian poet, or that there is a Russian poet of that name."

There was not a hint of a smile on Murvale Eastman's face as he rose to reply to this appeal.

"Our venerable friend, Dr. Phue," he said, "has been made the victim of a singular delusion. I certainly cannot affirm that there is a Russian poet named Worsoff, or ever has been. So far as I can now recall, I do not know the name of any Russian poet, nor do I think I ever read a Russian poem. I never saw nor heard the lines referred to by Dr. Phue until he read them, and quoted no verse of any sort in the address to which he refers. I have recently received by mail a copy of some verses in the handwriting of Mr. Lampson, and am informed that he is accustomed to sign his metrical effusions 'Worsoff the Russian,' in jesting allusion to his own infirmities. I do not doubt that Dr. Phue, I hope through no wish of his own, has been made the victim of this man's morbid desire for fame, or perhaps I should say notoriety."

While he was speaking Frank Marsh had left the reporters' table and gave a note to the secretary, who passed it on to the chairman. Dr. Phue examined closely the verses handed to him by Eastman and compared them with those in the report. When Eastman sat down the chairman said that while he did not deem it necessary, he would, with the consent of the Association, ask Mr. Marsh, of the *Breeze*, to state what he knew about the matter.

Thus called upon, Frank Marsh stated that he was present at the meeting referred to, made a verbatim report of all that occurred on that occasion, and had the original stenographic notes now with him; that Mr. Eastman not only did not make the statement attributed to him, but did not quote the lines referred to, or any lines whatever in any part of his remarks. He farther stated that he sat at the same table with Mr. Lampson that night; that Lampson did not take the speeches stenographically, but during the evening showed him a copy of verses which he claimed to have written, and which, so far as he could remember, were the lines read by Dr. Phue.

There was a moment's silence; and then the venerable accuser arose and in the most contrite manner said:

"Mr. Chairman and Brethren, I have to confess that I have been guilty of a grievous and inexcusable wrong, for which I ask your pardon, the pardon of our brother Eastman, and the forgiveness of my Heavenly Father. I would ask to withdraw the charge, but the brother who was wronged by its introduction has a right to a vote of exculpation, and the Association in justice to itself should pass a vote of censure against me for having introduced the same. I did not knowingly bring a false charge, Brethren, but I did it without specifically calling it to our brother's attention or seeking to obtain an explanation. It was a grievous wrong, and I admit that I deserve your censure."

Tears were running down his cheeks, but the rugged-souled old saint was as zealous for his own punishment as a little while before he had been for the chastisement of his brother. There were few dry eyes in the audience when he concluded, but a round of hearty applause burst forth when Murvale Eastman asked that no farther action be taken in the matter and no word or report of the proceedings already had be made, adding that he hoped before a great while, if Dr. Phue would consent, to ask the approval of the brethren to his installation as assistant pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies.

Then there was a wringing of hands, a wiping of eyes, and a hymn was sung full of peace and the quiet rapture of reconciliation.

At its conclusion the chairman humorously remarked that it was the first time he had known any real good to come out of a charge of heresy. He believed that nothing more clearly showed a healthful progress in the

Church, a wider and truer appreciation of the Christ-spirit, than the fact that the Church found something better to do with its dissenters than to drive them from possible error into almost inevitable unbelief. Instead of persecuting, it now set even the man suspected of dissent to work for man's good and God's glory, saying, as the Master said of the unauthorized healer in His name, "He that is not against us is for us."

CHAPTER XLI.

IS FAITH HOSTILE TO HUMANITY?

When the chairman had concluded his remarks, a member rose and said that as Mr. Eastman must be satisfied, from what had occurred, that he had the sympathy of the Association, he hoped he would resume his membership, and in order that there should be no embarrassment connected with it, he moved that the Rev. Murvale Eastman be cordially requested to withdraw his letter of resignation and continue a member of the Association.

Before the motion could be put the young minister rose and said:

"Mr. Chairman, I hope this motion will not be pressed. While fully sensible of the kindly spirit which prompts it, and very grateful for the confidence which my brethren have shown, not only to-day but at all times, and doubting not that in the future as in the past I should be sure of fraternal forbearance and kindly consideration, it seems to me not altogether fitting that the Association should make such a request. While it is true that my resignation was presented at this time in order to avoid the controversy which might be precipitated by Dr. Phue's intended arraignment, which I felt it my duty for the sake of the Church to avoid, yet it was not made on that account alone, nor intended to be retracted when those charges should be withdrawn. On the contrary, it was deliberately made and intended to continue in force so long as existing conditions remain.

"My Brethren are aware that circumstances have placed me in a position which some of them disapprove, which others doubt whether I had a right to assume, and still others perhaps question the policy of assuming because of my relation to the Church. As I have already stated, I recognize the fact that, with the best intentions, one may do much harm, and I have long since determined that, so far as can be avoided, the Church shall receive no detriment through any action of mine. As members of this Association, you become in a sense sponsors for my acts, and I am in sense accountable in Christian courtesy and kindness to you. While I have the utmost regard for the individual and collective judgment of my brethren, I yet feel that in this matter I am acting under divine leading, and may be compelled to adopt views which they might hesitate to approve.

"In other words, Brethren, I feel that the League of Christian Socialists is an experiment which you as Christian ministers are not yet called upon to indorse. I do not doubt your hearty sympathy with whatever professes to have in view the progress of humanity. The love of God inclines instinctively to love of man, even if it were not specifically enjoined upon us; but what is intended for good, by reason of unwise or defective methods may have disastrous or insignificant results. I have no right, by continuing a member of this Association, to bind you in the eyes of the world to assumed approval of my work, and have no desire to drive you to formal denial of responsibility for it. I believe the time will come when no member of this body will have any doubt upon the subject, and when every Christian believer the world over will see that his first and highest duty is to be, in spirit if not in name, a Christian Socialist. It is a work that must approve itself by results, however, and I have no right to claim for it the implied sanction of this body while many of its members are still in doubt in regard to it.

"Besides that, Brethren, I cannot but recognize the fact that it is quite possible that this work may, at no distant day, require me to give up my pastorate. Already my duties have so increased that, despite the liberal and efficient aid provided by our League, I find myself compelled to ask for help in my pastoral duties. My church has kindly consented to give me any assistance I may desire. It is possible that the interest of the church or the league may ultimately require a separation in their supervision. At present there are no indications of such necessity. Should any such crisis occur, I do not hesitate to say that, under present conditions, I should deem it my duty to abandon the ministry, in which my place might easily be more than filled by many of my brethren, to continue that work to which I seem to have been especially and individually called, and which—I trust you will pardon me for saying it—I believe to be at this time the most important field of Christian endeavor.

"Under these circumstances, I think every one will admit that it is plainly my duty, both as a man and as a Christian minister, to leave the members of this Association at liberty to approve or disapprove my work, as they individually see fit to do, by not resuming my membership in this body until all are satisfied that the Church can receive no detriment thereby. While I believe the work is of God, it is my duty and yours to be jealous of the Church and guard it against mistakes of judgment just as carefully as against intended assault. I trust the brethren will appreciate my position and approve my conclusion. So far as I know myself, I wish only to serve the Master."

There was a solemn silence when Murvale Eastman took his seat. There was nothing melodramatic in his words or manner, but each one realized that an earnest Christian soul stood ready to abandon what for centuries had been deemed the highest Christian caste, because its conditions might prove an obstruction to the Master's work committed to his hands. The situation was a new one, and impressed upon that body of thoughtful men, as nothing had done before, the conviction that the time had come for a new development of the Christian idea, the adjustment of methods to new conditions. After a time the member who had moved that Eastman be requested to resume his membership arose and without remark asked leave to withdraw the motion. There was no objection. By his own act Murvale Eastman had relieved his brethren of responsibility for his acts, and, with only his church behind him, stood alone as the promoter of the new thought. After a time the chairman arose and said:

"Every one must recognize the solemnity of what has just occurred. A Christian minister voluntarily withdraws from the Association, not only that he may pursue untrammeled a work which he believes that God has put into his hands, but lest any one should regard this body as tacitly indorsing such work. I must confess that it strikes me with peculiar force—this suggestion of a field of Christian endeavor which lies wholly outside of the Church, and in which the ministerial relation might prove obstructive. Brother Eastman's course has been in the highest degree honorable and manly. No one can doubt his devotion to the Master's cause, and in severing his relation with us, I am sure he has brought himself and his work nearer to our hearts. We shall follow him with our prayers, and trust that in promoting man's good he may have opened a new field in which men may work for God's glory."

There was another silence. At last, one of the oldest rose and said:

"Mr. Chairman, I have long felt that we are on the eve of great changes in regard to Christian faith and Christian work. I never thought that I should live to say it, but I must say that I agree with Brother Eastman, that the most important field of labor to-day lies outside the churches, that it cannot be done by the Church alone, and no one has yet found a way to enable all sects and creeds effectually to unite in such work. I confess that I do not wholly understand this League of Christian Socialists, and I for one would be very glad if he would enlighten us somewhat in regard to its character."

This proposition was received with evident satisfaction. Murvale Eastman was a favorite with his ministerial brethren, not more on account of his thorough manliness than because of his entire absence of assumption. Perhaps this feeling was helped out by the fact that, despite his unusual good fortune, he was not a great preacher. With all their kindliness, however, the members of the Association were very far from approving the course of the pastor of the Church of the Golden Lilies. They recognized his sincerity, but regarded the movement with which he had identified himself, not only with that distrust which always attends the introduction of new methods, but with peculiar suspicion because of its name.

Christian Socialism! Could the two words be properly joined? Did it not presage danger to the Church to have the name of its founder linked with so questionable an idea as Socialism? What, indeed, is Socialism? There was not a member of the Association who had failed to ask himself this question, and each one had dived into one or more encyclopedias for a reply. It is wonderful what a restrictive power the dictionary and encyclopedia are coming to be. They limit and define all our thoughts for us. The encyclopedia is the steel helmet which the modern thinker dons before entering the lists in defense of truth. His brain grows to the exact limit of its circumference and then stops perforce.

The Association had an encyclopedic notion of Socialism. It was not very clear. Communism, nihilism, anarchism, and something of half a hundred other *isms* perhaps, were jumbled up together, and the whole liberally besmeared with the blood of the French Revolution and the froth of Carlyle's rabid ravings. No wonder they trembled as this indistinct specter of a horrible dream floated before their eyes! They forgot to note that Socialism, in its broad sense, is simply the practical application of sociology, and in its limited sense the very antipode of Anarchism.

And *Christian* Socialism! They remembered that the early Christians had been communists, having all things in common, sending from distant regions by the hand of the Apostle a specific proportion of their earthly goods. Mockers have said this was Christ's plan. No doubt the early believers thought it to be his idea. Why should they not? The world's ideas of government and society were very crude at that time. The Master, gazing with tears upon the groveling masses—poor, ignorant, degraded, oppressed, helpless, hopeless, born to serve and suffer and die, begetting others only to follow in their footsteps and repeat their sad experience—the divine Teacher, catching the secret of the world's woe, perceiving the one only hope of betterment, had said to the dull ears which heard the words of hope but only half-realized their purport:

"All this will be changed if men will but hear my voice. I will lighten their burdens, sweeten their toil, enlarge their joys, diminish their woes. Nay, they shall themselves perform these things if they will follow my teachings." How? "Bear ye one another's burdens. Let each esteem his neighbor's right as his own. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

No wonder the heavy hearts were lightened and the dull brains began to plan to carry the Master's words into effect and bring fruition of this hope as soon as he had vanished from their sight! The communism of the early Christians was the first attempt of the unbelievers to put in practice his teachings. We do not know how far it extended, what peoples it embraced, by what machinery it was administered. We only know that it found shelter in the catacombs and was stamped out with the goat's hoof of ambition when Constantine dangled the bait of power before its leaders' dazzled eyes, and offered the chance to proselyte and persecute in all the kingdoms of the earth if they would permit him to put the cross upon his banner. He gave them in charge the souls of his subjects if they would help him to conquer his enemies and hold their bodies in subjection.

So the first effort to construe the Master's words, to exemplify the social theory he enunciated, was a failure. It is little wonder. The world of that day was very sterile soil in which to plant such precious seed. The gardeners to whom its care was committed had neither experience nor preparation. They did not realize the double—let us say rather the universal—nature of the tree "whose leaves were for the healing of the nations." So they made a bargain with the Devil that if he would yield them dominion over the souls of men he might work his will on their bodies; if he would yield the empire of faith he might control the realm of sense. It was a bad bargain, made to be broken by both. On it was based the bondage of ecclesiasticism, which was simply an endeavor to make faith the sole test of right; to establish as a universal principle the terrible dogma that the right to live depended on the acceptance of a specific religious theory. From that hour the mandates of the Church were written in blood! Well do we call "dark" the ages that followed!

Yet those misty centuries taught one lesson and taught it well: that faith is not the measure of human right, and that no demon is so terrible as blind-eyed, red-handed Bigotry! The rack and the stake are hid away forever under the rich verdure of liberty and civilization, but the world will always turn with a shudder to the time when they were the arguments of faith and the emblems of righteousness. The most ardent believer fears nothing to-day so much as an attempt to make individual liberty depend on religious belief. The Church itself, so far as Protestantism extends, has become the stoutest champion of the unbeliever's right.

So the members of the Association had a double ground for fear. As representatives of the Church they had a lively recollection of two great errors in its history: the one the failure of Christian Communism—a short, sweet, simple story, unstained with wrong and still fragrant with heroic devotion, brotherly love, and purity of life—the gentle thought the Saviour's words had generated in the hearts of the simple fisher-folk whom he loved! It was too frail a plant to stand the rough blasts of the world. It was doomed to droop and die. Yet the Saviour watered the seed with his tears and the early believers tended and trimmed it as best they knew. It has been the model of many a dreamer's aspiration since. On all these dreams is written "failure." Was "Christian Socialism" to be another of these failures? That was the question the members of the Association asked themselves.

They were jealous, too, of the use of the term "Christian." What right had any one not affiliated with the Church in faith to wear the Cross upon his shoulder and in that holy name begin a crusade for humanity? They believed the time had come for a new departure; they felt the need of new agencies and better conditions; but they were jealous for the faith, and were unwilling that it should be deprived of the sole and exclusive use of the Christ-name as the trade-mark of purpose or result. It is not strange that even the most charitable and progressive servants of the Church should have this feeling. They were accustomed to think of civilization as Christian in its excellences and unchristian in its defects. They had never thought of Christ's teachings as containing a social philosophy which is the free heritage of redeemed and unredeemed alike. They forgot that to "love thy neighbor as thyself" is the privilege of the unbeliever, as well as the duty of the disciple. So they were jealous for the faith they were set to guard, as well as tolerant and hopeful of all that promised good. They were pleased with the attitude of the young pastor, both because of the care he had exercised to prevent any detriment resulting to his church, and the prudence and caution he had exercised in the organization of his league. Thus far only good seemed to have resulted, but they could not without a shudder think of a minister allying himself with a body assuming the name of Christian Socialists, which openly ignored all questions of faith and admitted believers and unbelievers to the ranks on equal terms.

The Association really wanted light upon this subject and were more than willing to give him a hearing, and their approval of the proposition that he should address them on the subject was turned into applause when he said:

"Mr. Chairman, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to comply with this desire on the part of my brethren if I knew exactly the points upon which they desired information. If they will kindly ask such questions as they desire, I will endeavor to answer them as fully as I can."

He stood a moment waiting.

"Well, then," said the venerable man who had proffered the request, "to begin with, why do you call yourselves Christian Socialists?"

"We call ourselves Socialists because we desire to improve social conditions, and Christian Socialists because we believe that Christ's doctrine shows the way by which the betterment of social conditions may be achieved."

"Yet you do not believe—I mean the League does not believe—that faith in Christ is necessary to this result?"

"I understand; I speak for the League now. No; we do not regard what is termed a 'saving faith' as essential to human improvement or to the practice of Christian philosophy—the application of Christian principles to social conditions."

"Do you think it proper that God's work should be intrusted to the hands of unbelievers?" asked one of the members solemnly.

"God has never hesitated to use such instrumentalities," was the reply.

"But he has never authorized them to assume the name of his Son and in that name to proclaim healing to the nations."

"Men are prohibited from doing *evil* in his name, but invited to do *good* whether they follow with his disciples or not."

"But is there any merit in good works without faith?"

"We do not ask any merit. We do not claim that the League is an instrument of salvation. We leave that to the Church. The Church enjoins duty to our fellows because the Master commanded it; the League would apply his teachings to all phases of individual and collective life, because they are the soundest policy and the highest social truth. These are not 'Christian duties' in the sense of being restricted to and incumbent on Christians only. It is as much the duty of the unbeliever to be just and helpful to his fellows as of the Christian. The Christ-theory of human relation is not a principle of *Christian* conduct merely: it is universal, because it is based on human nature. If men do unto others as they would that men should do to them, they cannot fail to make the burden of society light."

"But can that rule be completely fulfilled except by the aid of the Holy Spirit?"

"It rarely is—with or without that aid—but I think

God is always on the side of the right, no matter who is trying to do what the Master's law requires of all. The League is not intended to test individual motive or merit, or promote personal salvation, but to improve social conditions and encourage good impulses."

"You think Christianity is of a duplex nature, then—a part of it intended to promote salvation and a part intended to secure better conditions?"

"In a sense, no doubt; at least the League of Christian Socialists proceeds upon the fundamental idea that the Christ-theory of human betterment would have been just as true if another had formulated it, and was just as true before he uttered it; that it is a universal law of human life, the highest policy, the wisest selfishness; that the more generally it is applied by any people, the worthier, happier, more peaceful, and more prosperous they will be; and that this is true utterly irrespective of any theory of redemption or individual salvation. What we desire is to increase the area of application of this principle by avoiding all questions of a purely religious character and furnishing a common ground on which saint and sinner, members of all sects and no sect, believers in all creeds and no creed, may work together for the application of the Christ-philosophy of human life to every phase of social relations."

"Do you expect to eradicate evil without purifying the source of evil, human motive? Can you have any Christian life without regeneration?"

"Do *you* expect to eradicate sin, my brother?" responded Eastman. "Personally, I believe that the practice of Christian philosophy tends to a belief in Christian doctrines, but whether it does or not, it inclines to a better life and makes man worthier of the salvation the

Church offers. We no more expect to eradicate evil than the Church expects to eradicate sin; we only hope to lessen its extent and mitigate its effects."

"But you do not believe in charity, I am told."

"We leave almsgiving, the relief of actual suffering, mainly to the State and the Church. That has been the peculiar field of activity on the part of the Church so far as human conditions are concerned, and as regards human suffering, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter and raiment, she may be said to have pretty nearly Christianized society, which does not, as a rule, allow the poor to starve, the infirm to suffer, or the sick to die unattended. Our Christian civilization has provided for the mitigation of such evils. So, too, it punishes crime and has done much to prevent contagion. But impoverishment, which is the chief source of crime, degradation, despair, hopelessness —it is still permitted, nay, it is even generally deemed commendable, to promote. The Church has no reproach for him who uses power to create poverty or compels the weak to submit to extortion. Society denounces the gambler, but worships the man who successfully 'bulls' or 'bears' a stock, puts up the price of breadstuffs by a corner, or makes a fortune by limiting the supply of coal or raising the price of petroleum."

"And do you expect to prevent such things?"

"We mean to do whatever may be in our power to lessen such evils; to prevent impoverishment when we can; to help keep the self-employer from sinking into the ranks of the dependent, the owner of the home from becoming homeless, the hopeful from becoming hopeless, the clean from becoming foul."

"And how do you expect to do this?"

"Not in any one particular way, but by all means that can be devised; personal assistance, co-operative action, public opinion, statutory restraint; by instruction, persuasion, example. Indeed, the study of methods is one of the most important of the aims and functions of the League."

"As you dispense with sect and creed in Christianity, so I suppose you will do without party in the State?"

"As we leave future salvation to the Church, so we leave government to the State," said Murvale, smiling. "We propose to discuss the betterment of general conditions and the means by which it may be promoted, leaving to individuals and parties the application of these principles."

"Will Brother Eastman give us some illustrations of what the League may have attempted in these directions?" asked the moderator.

"Certainly. The managers of a corporation adopted a rule that none of its employés should wear a beard. One of the employés, a man who had made his country his debtor for good deeds bravely done, sickened and died because of this tyrannical order. The League circulated a million leaflets asking Christian men and women not to patronize a road guilty of such pagan cruelty, and to cooperate in securing a law restricting the powers of corporate employers.

"Another corporation required its employés to buy a uniform from a certain manufacturing establishment at a higher rate than would be charged them at retail by an ordinary tailor. We called attention to this as a case of robbery just as unjustifiable as that practiced by Captain Kydd on the high seas!"

"But the employé knows the rules when he applies for the place," said a man in one of the pews.

"The fact that a man is obliged to submit to unjust conditions in order to obtain employment does not affect the question of right or wrong."

"Did not your league inaugurate a boycott of certain deserving tradesmen?" asked one.

"We found the newsdealers of the city selling the most degraded and pernicious literature to the boys and girls, the young men and women of our homes. It is the universal opinion of all students of criminal statistics that this is the most fecund of all the causes of crime, excepting only poverty and drunkenness. We had a list made of all who kept such literature and of those who promised not to keep it. This we sent to one hundred thousand church members asking them the plain question whether they ought to help pay for circulating such moral poison?"

"Why could not the Church do these things?"

"We are not antagonizing the Church, only doing what our hands find to do. The Church *did* not do these things which we have felt called upon to undertake. Many of those men whose acts we have been compelled to denounce are members of the Church, which has thus far failed to discountenance or forbid them."

"You find no difficulty on account of religious belief?"

"Believers and unbelievers work together in harmony."

"And your numbers are increasing?"

"Wonderfully. It seems as if people were waiting for it, expecting it, already feeling the need of it. Leagues are being organized in many other cities. To my mind, it promises a force divinely ordained to supplement the Church in the work of redemption."

"You have been having a very marked work of grace in your church, I think?" inquired the moderator.

"Very; unprecedented in its history."

"What is the effect of your league upon this spiritual work?"

"They began about the same time and have continued together to grow in interest ever since."

"But in cause and effect, I mean."

"I do not know," said Murvale solemnly, "but I believe that whatever promotes the love of man is sure to awaken, sooner or later, the love of God."

There was a low murmur of approval. The chairman raised his hand as if satisfied, and the Ministers' Association had taken a step toward the solution of the problem of to-day's civilization.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ULTIMATUM.

For a while Wilton Kishu faced impending peril without flinching. It was not the first time he had been threatened with disaster. His nerve was notable among the business men of the city, as well as his fertility of resource. All who knew him laughed at the idea of his being vanquished by such an adversary.

Yet Kishu did not underestimate the danger; neither did his counsel. His lawyer told him that the claimant's title was unimpeachable. The warranty he had given could not be evaded. Valentine's heirs were entitled to the land with all improvements. Kishu was liable to the parties for the difference between the present value and the price paid so long ago. Juries were not likely to favor false warranty: he made an estimate of the amount: to pay it would sweep away the accumulations of a life-time; not to pay it meant humiliation, disgrace.

His counsel advised him to take what money and valuables he could lay hands on, and go away to some foreign country—Mexico, Peru, anywhere; possibly he might get on his feet again. He would not listen to this plan. He would fight—fight and die, perhaps—but he would die where he had lived; he would not run nor dodge.

Then the lawyer proposed a compromise.

"With whom?"

"The claimant, Underwood."

Mr. Kishu shook his head; the attorney persisted. Finally his client assented. The next day the lawyer brought a sealed note containing, he was told, the only terms on which adjustment was possible. Wilton Kishu opened it nervously. He was a shade paler after its perusal. He put it back in the envelope and laid it on the desk before him.

"It is no use," he said in reply to the lawyer's questioning look.

"You think——" asked the lawyer, anxious to know the contents of the note.

"I *know*," interrupted his client, putting the note in his desk and locking it.

"You think we must——"

"Take the chances of a flaw, somewhere," said Kishu firmly.

In legal conflict as well as on the battle-field, it is the time between the development of the hostile force and the moment when the battle is joined that is most trying to the combatants. After the fight is once fully on, the excitement of the contestants blinds them to the fear of consequences until the end comes. This period of in-action and suspense told very hard upon Mr. Kishu. Hour after hour and day after day he sat moody and silent at his desk. He listened with indifference to the reports of his subordinates; asked few questions; gave little heed to business propositions that were broached by his callers, whom, indeed, he began to shun rather than desire.

For a time he did not lose hope, going doggedly over the whole ground seeking some way of escape. He had great confidence in his power of continued application to one particular subject. In this he had learned that he greatly excelled most men. Others talked about his luck. He believed in his brain. His mind was not brilliant. He did not think as fast as many others, but he could think longer on one subject than most men, and so had often found a way out of difficulty where others failed. It was to this faculty he appealed, in his present extremity. Over and over again he followed the same hopeless track, from issue joined until judgment rendered, seeking some loop-hole of escape. His brain seemed sluggish and inactive. Everything became overshadowed by the one thought he so relentlessly pursued. For the first time in his life he walked with his eyes fixed upon the ground. The pavement, walls, the cover of his desk, the blue sky when he looked upward—all were covered with his plans for relief—the vain schemes he worked out day by day, only to see them crumble into dust at night. He often failed to return the greetings of his friends; sometimes was unable immediately to recognize them when aroused from his reverie. These things became so evident that many noted it, and some shrewd observers ventured the suggestion that he was "losing his grip."

At home he passed his time in the library. It pleased him to have his daughter sit with him, but his wife's presence annoyed him. She was solemn and tearful. He thought she was mourning over the prospective loss of fortune. She wept only for his sake and because she could not comfort him. The great sorrow of her life had been a belief that he failed to appreciate her. She had mourned over it for years; yet she adored her husband and wept merely out of pity for herself, not from any desire to reproach him. Tears are sometimes unattractive, and the copious flow had long since loosened the tie of confidence between husband and wife. There was no quarrel or bickering. She bewailed the thought that he looked upon her with indifference; he regarded her with contemptuous pity because she was not content. She was forever dreaming of something she might do to command his admiration; he forever wondering what new blunder she would make. So the tactful man and tactless woman lived at cross purposes; the tie between them, the daughter who understood them both better than either did the other, and yet was powerless to bring them closer together.

He did not talk of his affairs. He had never been accustomed to confidants, except Lampson, indeed, and Lampson had gone. He had not thought the secretary would dare accept his challenge to leave his service, but he had not been able to obtain any trace of the man since he had gone from the office—except that he had left the city after visiting Metziger's office. His purpose in suggesting Lampson's going had been chiefly to avoid discreditable rumors, based on the one unlawful act of his life—the appropriation, even for a brief period, of another's property. Now his anxiety about that seemed to him absurd and trivial. It was not poverty or want, but *nothingness* that stared him in the face. What did he care for mere sentimental disapproval when the accumulations of a life-time were at stake! What would there be for him to live for, if he lost in this contest? He did not blame the claimant. He had a right to take what was his own. He did not wonder at the harsh terms offered in reply to his overture for compromise, either. What were the terms? He carried the note about in his pocket and read it over a dozen times a day:

"If the child from whom you took the trinket containing an opal, which on the next day you hypothecated for a loan of $2,000, is produced or accounted for, and it appears she has been kindly treated and well reared, the suits already begun and all other claims arising from defect of title in the lands of Daniel Ximenes Valentine's heirs may be adjusted by paying the present value of the lands without improvements. No other terms will be considered. JONAS UNDERWOOD."

It was written in a stiff, hard hand. The man who wrote it meant exactly what he said. There was no hope of mercy from him. Underwood! He remembered the name as soon as he saw the handwriting. He had not dreamed that this was the man he had wronged. It was strange he had not, for the name had haunted him for years. He had learned all about him at that time. The man had come from the West just before the war, bringing with him some sort of an invention. What was it? He remembered having looked it over once to see if there was money in it. It was not perfected then. Ah, he remembered—a knitter. The inventor had kept at work upon it with a pertinacity that commanded his respect. After a year or two Underwood completed it and began to make money—not very much, but there was promise of more—when the war came on, and after a few months of restlessness, he sold out his interest and entered the army. The woman was a widow when the child disappeared, or reported so, at least. But there were many husbands who disappeared in those days, to come back, broken and shattered, to homes that were as barren of joy as their lives were of hope.

So it was this man's child that was lost? How strangely things come about in this world! He had taken this man's property as the foundation of his fortune, and allowed his child to be lost in the trackless ocean of humanity, and now the man took him by the throat and said, "Your money or my child!" He had never harmed the child. Indeed, he had saved its life at the risk of his own. Yet Wilton Kishu admitted that this demand was not unjust. He had not intended to do wrong; he had not violated the law so far as the child was concerned, but he had not done right. If he had not weakly yielded to his wife's silly notion, he might have restored the child and avoided peril if not reproach. He acknowledged this, and wondered dimly if fate required of all men that they should always deal righteously with their fellows and rigorously exacted a penalty, even in this world, for infractions of this law. He could not refrain from smiling as the thought crossed his mind. Of course, it could not be so. Neither society nor religion required men to do right always. Such a rule might do for angels, but could not be applied to men. Society and religion merely demanded that men should obey the law. That was hard enough, but no one was responsible for the results of what he had a right to do—what the law permitted him to do.

He had violated the law, in one single instance, and from that had come all his trouble. This was the view which he took of his life, regarding it from a moral standpoint—his notion of the relation deity sustains to human conduct. An avenging destiny pursued him because he had disobeyed the command which makes possession sacred—had taken that which was another's; was for the time a thief, in short. He did not count the bereaved parent's years of agony as a meritorious appeal to Divine Justice. Why should he? He had been taught that suffering was of divine ordainment, why not this as well as any other? He did not imagine that the young soul which he had sent into temptation and degradation was forever crying out against him. The lost soul did not haunt his dreams, but the evil which the law expressly condemned—the sin which men dignify by the name of crime—this troubled his conscience; this made him acknowledge that his punishment was just. Such was his notion of divine justice and human rectitude.

A curious notion, do you say? Perhaps. Conscience is a curious thing at best. We speak of it sometimes as if it were divine. We call it an "inward monitor," the "judge of right and wrong which each man carries in his heart." One would think it an infinite right line, drawn through the domain of consciousness by the almighty Hand, by which all human thought might be tried and its truth or error detected. The truth is that conscience is only a mirror which reflects some ideal of duty. The ideal may be just or distorted; no matter, conscience reflects it as it is. Half the evil of the world springs from conscientious belief that the acts from which it results are right. The feudal lord believed in his right to rule; the master believed in his right to enslave; the pagan believes in human sacrifice; the Indian widow counts Suttee a sacred duty; the Christian landlord believes in his right to possess just as much of the earth's surface as the law will permit him to acquire; the Christian capitalist believes in competition, accumulation, and transmission, just as devoutly as in the Trinity he worships. Whatever results from what each man believes to be right, that also he esteems right. Conscience merely reflects that ideal of duty which environment plants in each nature, and each man esteems as permissible that which the general sentiment does not condemn. Now and then, some special exposure of an individual life creates a specially sensitive conscience. We call this sometimes "oversensitiveness," sometimes "morbidness." If the ideal becomes general, we look upon its early exponents as heroes or martyrs; if it does not, we laugh at them as fools and cranks. Conscience is not an infallible guide. It may impel to wrong-doing as well as to righteousness. So far as man's relations to man are concerned, there is but one rule of right: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." Conscience is a safe guide only when it cries, "Put yourself in his place."

Wilton Kishu was conscientious; but his conscience simply reflected the ideal of to-day's civilization, of to-day's Christianity. It is not worse than yesterday's; it is in most respects distinctly better. The trouble consists in looking to Yesterday for a standard. There has been no perfect civilization; there has been no perfect Christianity. The past is only a series of attempts at improvement and equally continuous struggles to prevent it. Conscience has always been on both sides. Civilization is not necessarily progress. Christianity is not necessarily righteousness. Civilization, when it is mere enlightened selfishness, is better than barbarism only in its methods. It *seems* worse, no doubt, to kill with a club than with an obstructed sewer, or by the restriction of opportunity; but it is the same thing to the man who dies. So, too, the Christian God is a sweeter deity than Moloch; but when Christianity does not impel the believer to recognize the rights, interests, and welfare of others as the measure of individual and collective duty, then, so far as concerns those who are wronged and weakened and debased in consequence, Christianity is no better than the cult of the Ammonite. It was no worse to offer children's bodies upon the altar than to weaken and debase and destroy child-lives for greed. It seems worse to slay with the knife than to kill by neglect, debasement, deprivation of opportunity; but so far as the victims are concerned, it is probably much the same.

Progress is the law of human existence only because there are more poor than rich, more weak than strong, more who suffer by wrong than enjoy by injustice. For that reason civilization tends to eradicate the sovereign and has already overthrown the idea of inherited right to rule: it eliminates the lord and destroys inherited privilege. From this has come the doctrine of equal right and the evolution of the citizen—the self-ruler. Thus far, however, civilization has developed rather than restricted the millionaire—the man who represents the restriction of others' opportunity for his own advantage; and the Christian conscience, thus far, approves the accumulation from which results the subjection of the individual.

Wilton Kishu's conscience, then, was troubled not because of broken lives, but on account of a broken law.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE TWIG BREAKS.

THE unexpected agitation of her father, resulting from her whispered intimation of some knowledge of the most unpleasant episode of his life, had confirmed Lilian's previous conviction that the only mode of extricating him from disaster was to hasten her marriage with the young minister, in whose hands she believed lay the power to save or ruin. In both hypotheses, as the reader already knows, she was only half correct. Her father's agitation had resulted from the belief induced by his apprehension that she knew much more than she did. While on the other hand the power to continue or discontinue the search, with its resulting effects—which had once been in Eastman's hands—had been taken from him by the confession of Lampson, this confession, made to Mr. Metziger, to whom he had given the money received from his employer to conduct a search for the girl, whom he had somehow come to believe was still alive, established a probability that Mr. Kishu had either concealed the child's death or had in some manner disposed of her in order that he might enjoy the fruits of robbery of the jewel from her person; and thus it had deprived the young divine of all control over the forces that were working together for Wilton Kishu's destruction.

This knowledge had transformed Jonas Underwood into a relentlessly revengeful force. He had been willing to forgive Wilton Kishu for having unlawfully come into the possession of what was his, and having retained it so long while he and his wife suffered from the comforts it would have bought; but when he thought that this man might have relieved the mother's anxiety by telling what he knew, of the long days of pitiful woe and the nights of tearful agony which the brave, gray-haired wife had endured—when he thought of these things, the fires of hell blazed in Jonas Underwood's eyes, and the rage of unsparing revenge filled his heart. Consideration for Murvale Eastman and Lilian had entirely disappeared from his thought in the white heat of his resentment. He would crush, destroy, degrade, punish—kill if he could—the man whose selfishness and greed had caused that loving heart such anguish. It was all for her; he did not count his own suffering; in fact, he was unconscious that he had known any suffering, in his consuming desire to avenge her woe upon the brutal, devilish wretch who had tortured her for half a life-time that he might enjoy the fruits of unlawful gain.

What did he care for the pride, the good name of the family of this wretch, whom he hated because of his cruelty and despised because of his baseness! He would fling him down; he would trample him in the mire of disgrace; he would impoverish and degrade him; he would make *his* wife taste the bitterness of poverty; he would condemn his beautiful daughter to hunger and want—ay, even to shame—if he could possibly compass such results. To this end he was willing to sacrifice all he possessed and all he hoped to secure. He was a fiend incarnate of revenge. But he said to himself that it was right that he should do these things, because this man who stood so high in the world's esteem was a brute, who cared nothing for the woe of others so long as his own desire might be gratified. It was a terrible picture, and Mr. Kishu would have been amazed at the hellish lineaments assigned to him by the fevered fancy of this husband and father, whose sufferings he had never accounted any serious matter. People who think they have been wronged are apt to be unreasonable, and people who have never tried to put themselves in the place of those who suffer are apt to think them extravagant in their views.

Still more would Lilian have been amazed if she had known that it was this firebrand of fate that controlled the destiny of Wilton Kishu, rather than Murvale Eastman, whose love she believed would disarm resentment and perhaps even blunt his sense of duty.

While she did not regard the prospect of marriage with Murvale with entire satisfaction, the notion that she was doing it to save her parents from humiliation gave it a heroic aspect altogether pleasing. From that moment she had looked forward to the accomplishment of this design with a fixed and earnest purpose quite at variance with her previous indecision. Indeed, she had received the news that Frank Marsh had declined the tempting offer made to him by her father, not only with composure, but with actual satisfaction. It was not best that she should meet him too frequently after his passionate avowal. She did not want him to go away, and was glad he had taken a better position on the *Breeze* instead of going to San Francisco as it had been announced that he would, but she did not care to see him too often—just now, at least.

She had not been in any haste to reply to Murvale's letter, both because of her own indecision and because she had been somewhat startled by the turn affairs had taken. When she saw the storm gathering over her father's head, and felt that she could no longer delay action, she took her initial step with a skill that proved her a worthy daughter of the great negotiator. Ignoring the weeks that had elapsed and the fact that her last letter to him had been one of peremptory dismissal, she wrote:

"DEAR MURVALE:—Your letter disturbed me so that I could not answer at once. It is shocking to think that the ring you placed on my finger should prove to be the only memento of the loss which our friends, the Underwoods, sustained so many years ago. Poor child! One can only hope and pray that she fell into kind hands and has been tenderly cared for. If I could see you I think I could help you in this search. Of course you must know that there is nothing in the matter that could be discreditable to my father. LILIAN."

In reply to this she received the following. The man's straightforward nature had failed to note the artfulness of her reply. He was engrossed with the thought that peril impended over her:

"DEAR LILIAN:—I am afraid that there is some terrible mystery connected with the disappearance of Mr. Underwood's child. I cannot think that your father knew of her death and has remained silent these many years. Yet such is the testimony of the last one who saw the child alive, and only the next day, your father pledged the opal for a loan. Why did he not reveal what he knew? Why does he not do it even now? O Lilian, my heart bleeds for you and for him. May the grace of the Most Holy direct you both. MURVALE EASTMAN."

Lilian took occasion during the day after this was received to show her father these two letters. He glanced over them moodily and handed them back.

"Why don't you do as he suggests?" she asked.

Wilton Kishu shook his head.

"You must do something."

"What can I do—accuse your mother?"

"You did not kill the child!"

"No; my wife stole it—kidnapped, the law calls it," he answered bitterly.

"But you did not know it was lost—whose it was, I mean?"

"Not until afterward—then I did—everybody knew. The papers were full of it."

"But why did you not give information?"

"I don't know—I didn't."

"Why do you not now disclose what you know?"

"There is no use."

"She might be found."

"Better not."

Lilian took out her mother's letter and held it toward him.

"Yes, I know; I followed that up; spent three months at it. Couldn't find a trace."

"You think she is dead then?"

"Or worse."

Lilian shuddered.

"Dear papa," she said, kneeling at his feet, "is there no way—nothing that can be done?"

He put Underwood's note into her hand.

"You see," he said—"the girl or your money—that is all."

"And would it take so very much?"

Her father smiled grimly.

"All we have got."

"And is there no—no other way?"

"I—I haven't found any—yet," he answered with significant emphasis.

"Never mind," she said, kissing his forehead as she forced herself into his arms. "Your little girl will find a way."

"The minister—you think?"

She smiled archly.

"It has gone beyond him," gloomily.

"Oh, you will see!" she responded gayly.

"Too late," he answered. "Lampson has got the start of me."

"You just wait," shaking her finger at him mischievously.

"That is all there is to do," was the hopeless reply.

"Don't be discouraged: wait until I have tried. I expect to see you in your old place in the Golden Lilies yet."

He shook his head dejectedly.

"Do you want to know what I am going to do? Well, I am going to ask Mr. Eastman to dine with us to-morrow night."

"He will not come."

"But if he does and—and asks you for your daughter afterward—you will not refuse him?"

"I suppose not—but—he will not come."

"Wait and see. I am going to write a note to him this very minute."

She kissed her father again, sat down at the desk and penned the invitation. The next morning before her father started to his office, he asked her if she had received a reply.

"He says he has an imperative engagement," Lilian answered, tears forcing their way between the lids.

"Yes; the Christian Socialists meet to-night," her father said bitterly. "It's no use!"

He turned back from the door and kissed her with unusual earnestness as she stood upon the rug. She tried to utter some words of encouragement, but could not.

"Good-by," he said, looking wistfully back as he opened the door and went out.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PROTEST OF DESPAIR.

WILTON KISHU looked back at his home after he had entered his carriage. He had spoken cheerfully to his coachman; told him he would take a turn before going to the office and asked him to drive slowly. The morning was bright and crisp. The servant was glad to see his master look so much better than he had of late. At the corner Mr. Kishu turned and looked back at his house once more. Just as the intervening buildings hid it he waved his hand as if bidding farewell.

Then he cast his eyes down and began to think over the situation. He had thought it over a thousand times already. He knew what the result would be, and had determined upon the course he would take. He had waited from day to day, hoping that something favorable would occur. Hope was now dispelled. Murvale Eastman had repelled his daughter's advances. He saw it all. His enemies had made common cause against him—Underwood, Eastman, Lampson: and they had a great host of allies. It was useless to attempt to make head against them. He might save enough to live on; his lawyer thought even at the worst a considerable sum might be left him. Not one of his many millions, but perhaps a hundred thousand—possibly more. At any rate it was not want he feared. His wife and daughter had enough. He had provided for them—not lavishly, but prudently—long ago.

What he did fear was something far more terrible—the loss of position, prestige, rank in the world where rank was measured by accumulation. To do him justice, Wilton Kishu cared little for money in itself. He would never have made a miser. He did not care for luxury, either; he was not given to indulgence. What he did love beyond all other things, beyond himself even, was the ulterior effect of his fortune—the things that flowed from it. He delighted to think of himself standing on what he had heaped up and looking down on those who had failed or who were still eagerly striving to equal or surmount his success. He loved to think of himself as one among the few who had not one, but many millions. What would he be without them? Who would care for Wilton Kishu with a mere competence? He knew men did not value him for himself, but for the power he represented. What would he be without that power? A failure! That was the only word to represent it. A man who had climbed up only to be ignominiously hurled down! Men would laugh at him—worse still, they would pity him. His friends, who had already grown cold, would tell of his eccentricities and ridicule the idea that he should have thought of holding his place on such a dizzy pinnacle.

He would not live to meet the scorn of those whom he had outdone! This was the conclusion at which he arrived. It had been the end of all his reveries of late.

The coachman, shivering despite the furs in which he was wrapped, looked down and asked his master's pleasure—where he wished to go.

"Anywhere: drive on!" thundered Wilton Kishu in reply.

They went on through the bustling streets; he took no heed of the route or what happened along it. Men greeted him from the pavement, but he did not heed their salutations. He began to think of what would be done and said after he was gone. He thought his wife and daughter would go abroad. His daughter would marry, of course. His grandchildren would hardly hear his name, though. No matter; he had never cared to found a family. If he could not be remembered as rich and successful to the last, he preferred not to be remembered at all. He wondered what would become of his office and the church he had built. All at once it flashed upon him that the church would become the property of his enemy; it would no longer be spoken of as his. If his name were linked with it at all, it would be in scorn! And his office, his clocks, his curios! The clocks should never strike nor tick for another. No man should say, "I bought this or that at the sale—after Kishu's failure!" No man should have any such memento of him. He thought how he would splinter and destroy them! What he could, he would burn. He was glad of one thing—he was strong.

He pulled off his heavy glove, held out his right arm, clenched his fist and tried the muscles. The hand was white and soft, but the grip was like a vise. The nails sank into the soft flesh, and the blood settled dark and blue about the white spots where the pressure was greatest.

The muscles cracked as the unaccustomed tension was applied to them. There was no doubt as to his strength. He was anxious to begin the work of destruction without delay. He thought what instruments he should require—a hammer and a hatchet—no, an ax, such as he used to swing when he was a lumberman upon the mountains before the raft brought him to the city and launched him on the wild tide of fortune. He would leave no dainty work of spoliation behind him! Men should see that he who had builded could also destroy! He would even destroy the Golden Lilies if he could! Why should he not? It was his. He had made it, created it! Others had given money, he had given soul, brain, creative energy. It was his. Others might use, occupy, but nobody else could ever possess it! He would think of this farther when he reached his office.

He called to the driver and directed him to a well-known hardware establishment. When they reached it he went in and bought an ax, a hammer, and a saw. The tradesman intimated that he must intend them for a present to some deserving laborer. Mr. Kishu neither admitted nor denied. The dealer called his clerk's attention to the act as indicative of the man's charitable character, as he left the store, carrying his purchases himself to his carriage, which he insisted upon doing. He saw them looking at him through the great plate-glass window of the store, behind which was displayed a marvelous variety of tools—a great circular saw in the middle with knives, chisels, augers, and a multitude of other forms of polished steel. The proprietor smiled admiringly at his rich customer over the jagged circle of the great saw. Mr. Kishu knew what they were saying, and was glad. It was almost the only unsolicited evidence of approval he had met in a long time. He wondered if he should really have any use for the instruments he had bought. Nevertheless he took them into his office and stowed them away on one of the long shelves under the book-case. There were many curious things there: a shark's jaw, the blade of a sword-fish, some Indian war-clubs, and a bunch of scalps—things too horrible to keep in constant view, and yet interesting sometimes, especially to ladies. He smiled as he thought of the queer addition he was making to this horrible stock.

He spoke pleasantly to Thomas, examined his mail with unusual interest, sent for his subordinates and gave full and minute directions as to the business of the day; went out to luncheon with a friend, and seemed so much brighter than he had been of late that every one remarked it. Mr. Kishu, with all his faults, was one of those men whom the world likes to see prosper, not because he was better than other men, but because he did not trouble himself about making others better. He was not only willing to live and let live, but he was willing to let others live in almost any way they chose. He did not trouble himself to set things right.

When he returned to his office he told the attendant he might draw the shades partly up, close the office, and take a holiday. He waited to see his directions carried out, and gave the man a ten-dollar gold-piece to make his holiday pleasant.

He stood awhile looking out over the shades drawn half-way up, and saw the gayly-dressed crowds go by, chatting and laughing in the winter sunshine. The clocks chimed musically. He turned with a smile and looked from one to another. Every one had a history—some pleasant, some sad, but all unique. There was not such another collection in all the world, and only one or two that approached it. In a little while, those which are now confessedly inferior would be striving with each other for the prize of excellence. He hummed a pleasant tune as he sauntered back into his private office.

He stopped for a moment before the grate, his back toward the fire, and his hands clasped behind him. He was thinking of the Golden Lilies. It had troubled him all day—the notion that this church he had loved would remain a perpetual reminder of his rise and fall to all who beheld its exquisite beauty. He was not afraid to die. He was no coward. He knew that what he contemplated was sinful—he even counted it a deadly sin. He expected to be punished for it—yes, punished eternally. He even recalled the lurid description of the place of torment given by Dr. Phue some weeks before in that very room. Curiously enough he smiled at the recollection—not that he doubted; on the contrary, he believed. But what did he care for the picture of torment? What he desired to do was to eradicate himself from the earth. He intended to risk the hereafter—take such punishment as might be meted to him—but at all hazards he meant to avoid earthly shame, humiliation, ridicule. All the time there was running through his mind, half-unrecognized by his consciousness, the inquiry whether he might not somehow destroy or irretrievably deface the beautiful structure he had builded. He thought of setting it on fire, but could not see how he could effect an entrance. Besides that, he shrank from an act of ordinary arson. It did not seem in keeping with his character. If he could only lay it in ruins! He had thought a dozen times of gunpowder—it was too cumbrous; of dynamite—he did not know where to obtain it or how to handle it. He half-thought he should have to forego this part of his plan.

All at once he started and glanced up at the case that ran along the side of the room. His cheek grew pale and his knees trembled. He went across the room and sat down in his great cushioned chair, glancing up at the window uneasily. Then he smiled at his own emotion, nodded his head, and chuckled gleefully to himself. He looked brighter than he had in months. The burden of woe that he had carried so long seemed lifted from his shoulders in an instant. He had found a way to accomplish his purpose. He nodded his head emphatically and contentedly. Then he rose and opened one of the glass cases that ran along the side of the room and took out a square, polished box. He closed the case; locked it carefully; sat down at his desk, and taking a bunch of keys from a drawer tried one after another in the lock of the box, whistling softly to himself as he did so. He could hear the steps and the chatter of the passers-by, but he was alone—alone in the midst of the great city's life. At length the lock yielded and he opened the box. Within it was a green glass globe, a little larger than a base-ball, resting on a bed of soft white cotton. The lid was cushioned, too. He looked at it curiously, still whistling, turned it over carefully, and revealed a mass of red sealing-wax, stamped with a German motto. He remembered its purport: "The Protest of Despair." He stopped whistling and smiled as he read it. What was the use of the preparation he had made to destroy his treasures? He had only to drop that on the floor and there would be an end of all things in the room. It was one of the bombs prepared for a great anarchistic uprising. Its duplicate had cost a monarch his life and decimated his guard. Its power was incalculable. How the heedless crowd upon the street would stare to see wall and window leaping out upon them!

He had not thought of that before. There was a charm in this sort of a sensational taking off! It might seem accidental—probably would be. This would save the feelings of his family. He had intended, after destroying all his unique surroundings, to provide for his death otherwise. He had the means in his desk. He had thought some of setting the whole on fire—had almost concluded that he would. And this—this ball of glass—would do it all in an instant! But then the Golden Lilies—that would stand as his pitiful monument forever if he did! This malignant globe would save him from that too. Only hurl that against the door, the tower, the roof, anywhere, and the Golden Lilies, *his* church, would never serve to point a jest at him! Why not? He rose hastily and walked across the room. The clocks began to strike again. He looked around smiling as he recognized the notes of one after another. "Plently of time," he said to himself. Then he seated himself at his desk and began to write. "No man shall say I shirked anything," he muttered.

He wrote, not very rapidly, but in almost microscopic characters with the lines very far apart. Probably no one ever saw Wilton Kishu's handwriting for the first time without expressing surprise at its character. It seemed utterly inconsistent with the man himself. This was because his external qualities were such as to mislead the superficial observer. Judging by form alone, the careless deduction was often made that his handwriting would be loose and scraggly. Nothing could be farther from his mental make-up. Precision, certainty, were the very breath of life to him intellectually. Nothing ever happened to him; everything was planned, deliberately predetermined. The fine, firm letters and straight, unguided lines were a perfect type of the directness and unyielding temper of this man who had won success in the very field for which he seemed least fitted, by unremitting assiduity and unresting watchfulness.

He wrote on steadily, firmly, tracing the even lines across the white, heavy paper, having at the top in place of a crest the one embossed letter, "K." He filled one page, another, and half a third, never once pausing for a word and making no erasure. He knew what he wanted to say; not that he had conned it over, but the training of a life of business in which brevity and directness had been recognized as the most valuable qualities, had given him great facility in the clear expression of his thought. When he had finished the letter he blotted and folded it without reading. He put it in an envelope and directed it to

"JONAS UNDERWOOD, ESQ.,
Hotel Hygeia,
Point Comfort, Va."

He looked at the superscription a moment, laid the letter down upon his desk and walked back and forth across the room, seated himself and began to write again. When he had finished this letter, he took a check-book from his desk, glanced at the balance, filled out the stub, and drew a check which he folded into the letter. When he had sealed the envelope and directed it to "Joseph Lampson, Esq.," he hesitated a moment, holding his pen close-gripped in his short, chubby fingers, then added, "In care of Rev. Murvale Eastman, City."

The clocks chimed again. The winter day was drawing to a close. Already the electric lights flickered and gleamed without, casting gray, unreal, dancing shadows over marble and granite fronts, on the snowy streets and hurrying crowds. Wilton Kishu stood with his letters in his hand looking over the half-raised window-shade as the darkness came on. For a moment he hesitated, then he put on his hat, went out, and dropped his letters in a box a dozen steps away. He walked cautiously, for the pavement was slippery and the wind blew cold and gusty; a policeman proffered his assistance. Mr. Kishu accepted his aid, thanked him kindly and gave him a douceur for his thoughtfulness. When he returned he drew up the shades, touched a button, and the electric globes all over the room shone at once with a soft, genial light. He went back to his desk, sat down in the wide arm-chair, turned it half-around, and gazed dreamily about his office.

How comfortable it was! How complete in all its appointments! How happy he had been in it! He had never thought of it before in that way. He had enjoyed the pleasure and surprise of others in witnessing its perfections, but he had been too busy to think that they had contributed materially to his own happiness. Now he realized that everything about it had become a part of himself. Here he had planned his triumphs, won his success, enjoyed his victories! And now— A twinge of pain swept over his face. It hurt him to think of destroying what he loved so well. It seemed like ingratitude, as if the whole place was animate with something more than memories—real pleasures indeed, which cried out in every tick and chime against annihilation at the hands of the man they had served so faithfully, so joyfully. He thought his clocks, his furniture, his curios, must love him, as he had loved them. Sweat broke out upon his brow. He rose and walked about, taking a last look at everything. His face paled and purpled by turns. He sat down panting and distressed.

"Not yet—not quite yet!" he murmured. "The church first!"

He opened a drawer and took from it the plans of the church. He must decide where he would explode the bomb. He meant to make thorough work. It was not from a spirit of revenge, but because he wanted to eradicate all traces of himself from it. Alas! he found himself all over it. From foundation to apse, his thought was everywhere. How much would the bomb destroy! He took it out of its case and held it in his hand, while he read the account of the devastation wrought by its duplicate in the broad avenue of the foreign capital. He knew it all, but he read it word for word, how it had torn up the pavements so that a cart might almost be hidden in the holes it made. He smiled grimly as he read. It was turning the weapons of the Socialists against themselves; for they were all alike, Socialists, Anarchists, Nihilists, it mattered not what—Christian or un-Christian, they were all the same—fire-brands, robbers, bomb-throwers, *pétroleuses*—all mere envious haters of the rich. They had no right to use the church; it was a profanation of its sacred precincts.

A beautifully-colored photograph of the Christ-head lighted by the sun shining through the western oriel fell out from among the plans he was examining. He picked it up. In a moment the tears were running down his cheeks; his lips quivered; his hand trembled. He reached over and hastily deposited the glass globe in the case from which he had taken it. Laying the picture on the desk and leaning his head upon his hands, he gazed long and earnestly upon it. He took a handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes, throwing his head backward as he did so, while his broad chest heaved tumultuously with the sobs that burst from his lips. What was it moved the strong man so profoundly? The religious sentiment, buried beneath years of passionate devotion to selfish aims, had suddenly reasserted itself and showed him the brink on which he stood. His soul started up in affright, not so much at the thought of doom, as in horror at the crime he was about to commit—the crime against the loving Christ whose picture in the flaming apse of the Golden Lilies had become almost animate to him! He could not lift his hand against it to destroy—nay, he could not destroy himself, since the Master had forbidden. Like Him, he must suffer! The Master had suffered and died; he must suffer and live!

He flung himself upon his knees beside the lounge which stood opposite, sobbing and moaning. The sobs continued, mingled with half-articulate supplications. This tremendous revulsion of feeling was too much for his sturdy organism, depleted of strength by the long nervous strain of weeks. There came a moan; a thrill passed through his frame. The muscles gave way and the body sank down upon its side, still propped against the lounge, the head pressed against the leather cushion and the face turned upward to the light. The cheek quivered; the lips twitched. The eyes, wide-opened, were fixed and sightless. The jaw dropped. The breathing was labored and stertorous. One relaxed arm was outspread upon the cushion, the other hung inert against his side.

The clocks began to strike, softly it seemed, as if afraid to waken the man who loved their chiming. Laughing crowds hurried along the street. The bell of the Golden Lilies sounded through the chill winter night. Wilton Kishu had been saved from Sin and delivered from the dominion of Evil.

CHAPTER XLV.

NATURE GREATER THAN ART.

"Is that you, Frank?"

Lilian Kishu spoke the words tremulously and plaintively into the receiver of the telephone. Evidently the answer was satisfactory, for she continued in a more cheerful tone: "Oh, I'm so glad! We are much troubled about papa."

Then in response to an inquiry:

"'What's the matter?' Why, he hasn't come home; and we haven't heard of him since morning and can't imagine what has become of him."

There was a pause and a murmur of a distant voice.

"No, he's not at the office. I've been there and it's all shut up. We don't know where Thomas lives and—and I don't know what to do. Of course, we don't want to show any alarm, and don't like to send the servants out after him, but he has been very—very much depressed, you know, of late, and it is so unusual for him to be away without letting us know, that we are greatly disturbed. To keep mamma quiet I told her I had heard him speak of going out to dine, hoping he would come in time to prevent her from learning the deception, but he hasn't come and I can't learn anything of him. O Frank, what *shall* I do? I am sure something terrible has happened. What?"

There was a crackling murmur on the transmitter.

"Oh, do, please!"

There was a moment's silence, but the fair girl still stood with the transmitter pressed against her ear.

"Hello!" she said in answer to a hail received. "I can't think of any place he would be likely to go. You might ask the *Thunderbolt* office. I was afraid to do it myself."

She laughed at some evidently jocose reply.

"Yes; I know you could," she replied. "You do tell a fib—so—so gracefully!"

Marsh was evidently using his humor to relieve her apprehension.

"All right, I'll wait."

Presently the crackling in the transmitter told her he was again at his place.

"I am afraid not," she said, after listening to his report, "but it is a great relief to know he was in such good spirits after he reached the office. We noticed it at breakfast. Do you suppose—it is possible perhaps that Murvale—Mr. Eastman, I mean—may know where he is. I think it is that matter—the suit, you know—that has been troubling him."

Lilian listened eagerly for a reply. It was evidently a suggestion.

"I wish you would," she rejoined, "if it is not too much trouble."

Then after a moment's listening: "Thank you; I shall wait very patiently until you come. I am sure you will find papa, but don't let him suspect, please, that we were anxious. It might trouble him, you know."

Ten minutes afterward Murvale Eastman rang the bell and was admitted by Lilian herself. Her face flushed with pleasure as she greeted him.

"Mr. Marsh said you wished to see me—something about your father," he said as he took off his wraps with that celerity and precision which characterized all his movements; "so I came at once. He has not arrived, I suppose—Marsh, I mean?"

"Not yet."

"He said he had some matters to attend to at the office which might delay him a little while."

Lilian thought of the difference in the two men as she ushered Murvale Eastman into the library. This one had dropped everything to make instant response to her demand for aid. Ten minutes before he had been a half a mile away, probably busy in his study with work of the gravest importance. Now he was ready to do her bidding. Why did she not love him? She ought to do so—she would—if he would only give her some little chance. She closed the door as they passed into the library, and came and stood beside him by the glowing grate.

"It is a cold night," he said, extending his hands above the fire.

"I suppose so."

She placed her arm on the mantel and put the toe of her slipper against the fender, holding back her dress with the left hand as she spoke. The action was instinctive. She did not feel the slightest chill, but it seemed natural that she should show some sensible appreciation of the fire he was enjoying.

"Well?" he said inquiringly, looking down at her without noticing her pretty pose, her flushed face, or the questioning look in her eyes. It was the first time he had been alone with her in months. His coldness hurt her despite her anxiety. She had determined to become his wife. The very fear she had experienced showed her that it was all the more necessary that she should hold to her purpose. Strangely enough, she had not felt a single thrill of apprehension since she had heard his voice. Such was her confidence in his power to accomplish what he undertook, that she already regarded her former fear vain. It was almost ten o'clock; but she was sure now that her father was safe. It would not surprise her to have him walk into the room at any moment. She hoped he would —and find them together. Thinking of her father reminded her how much depended on her carrying out the rôle she had assigned herself. She must tell Murvale all that she had learned, make him her confidant, bind him to her irrevocably. She did not doubt his love. She must make him show it.

"O Murvale!" she said, laying her hand upon his arm and drawing timidly closer to him; "you do not know how—how glad I am—that you have come!"

Her eyes were cast down; her bosom heaved; her voice was low and pleading.

A flush passed over Eastman's face. Had he been mistaken? Did she love him? He tried to pull himself together, but his tone was not exactly positive as he replied, not altogether pertinently:

"Anything I can do—of course," with that he stopped and looked down upon the beautiful head bowed humbly before him. Almost before he knew it her head had fallen on her hand which rested on his arm.

"I am so sorry," she said contritely, "to—to—have made you so much—trouble."

"No trouble in the world," said the matter-of-fact man, becoming himself again and placing his hand caressingly upon her head as if she were a child. "You didn't suppose I would hesitate to come, did you, Lilian?"

There was a touch of tenderness in his voice as he spoke her name. Lilian felt it. If she had seen the quiver of his lip and the burning light of his eyes as he looked down upon her, she would have thrown herself upon his breast, her arms about his neck, and have made an end of doubt, for the sake of the father whose absence she had for the nonce almost forgotten.

"Is your father ill?" he asked after a moment.

"He is gone—" said the conscience-stricken girl, her fears returning with redoubled force at this inquiry. "We don't know where he is, Mr. Eastman. We can't learn anything about him since morning."

Her fears returning upon her with renewed force after their brief withdrawal, she sobbed and wept, quite forgetful by whom she was supported.

"There, there," said Eastman, restored to his natural quiet and self-possession by her passionate grief. "Don't give way, now; sit down and tell me all about it. There is probably no reason for alarm."

He handed her to one of the great russet leather chairs and seated himself in another beside her.

"It must seem very foolish to you," she said as she wiped her eyes and looked up at him with a smile—"so much alarm because a man is not home to dinner. Mamma is not so very much disturbed, because he used to go off that way a good deal when business called him out of the city, and forget to let her know until perhaps he would telegraph from somewhere a hundred miles away. Sometimes, too, he would go out to dine or to a meeting of some sort without letting us know; but for two or three years he had done less business and has been more at home.

"It would not alarm me so very much now, but I have been with him a great deal of late and I know he was suffering from anxiety and—and—I hardly know what I am afraid of. It is all that dreadful matter about the lawsuits," she finally burst out in a tone of desperation—"with Mr. Underwood, you know. He thinks they will ruin him and—and—well, you see it has made him desperate, and he has not been himself for weeks—he has not, truly."

She clasped her hands in her lap and looked up at him with tears rolling down her flushed cheeks.

"I thought," she continued, "that you might—I am sure you could if you would—settle the matter somehow, without quite ruining us?"

She looked at him appealingly. Murvale dropped her hand and walked across the room once or twice.

"Do you know the offer that has been made him?" he asked almost sternly, stopping before her.

Lilian bowed without looking up.

"Why doesn't he accept the terms? Why doesn't he tell this father what he knows about the child he has lost?"

"He can't, Mr. Eastman."

"Cannot—why? Was the child drowned?"

"Drowned? No; I wish it had been."

She spoke hysterically and began to weep again.

"I don't understand you," he said, speaking more gently.

"How can I tell you? I thought perhaps—if—if things had been different, I might have told you."

He saw her burning cheeks, though her eyes were fixed upon her hands as she nervously knotted and undid the handkerchief in her lap.

"Surely, Lilian, you can trust me?"

"Yes, I can—I will," she exclaimed resolutely, glancing up at him—"but don't look at me—please."

He turned away, and she went on hurriedly as if afraid her courage would forsake her.

"He wasn't to blame about the child at all—at least, not as you think. He saved her when the boy who had stolen her fell over the bank—saved her at the risk of his own life too, and brought her home. He was in great need of a small sum of money just then—to conclude a trade, you know—and after he went to the office that night he found in his pocket the plaything which the child had given him. Curious to know what it was, he opened it, and found the opal within. He says it made him shudder, then, and I'm sure it has made trouble enough to justify his fears.

"Yes; he used it. That was wrong, I know; but he did not mean to keep it. He went away to close the trade and was gone some weeks. He left the little girl at home—with mamma, you know—and she—please look away—she was jealous—and sent it off. She would not tell him where it was. He hunted up the mother; he did not dare tell what had happened—or I suppose thought he would some time find the child. But he sent the mother money from time to time until he lost sight of her. He thought she was a widow."

"But the child?" asked Eastman, turning suddenly and confronting her.

"Mamma provided for her, but—you know she is—not—perfect, Murvale. She would not tell what had become of it until years afterward. Then she showed papa a letter. It was too late. He sought but could not find her. He told me all about it. The man was dead—all trace of him was lost—and—and the woman—she was lost, too. I am afraid he has gone in search of her again, and he is not fit for such work now—not fit to travel alone, you know."

"Do you know what was in that letter?"

"There it is."

Lilian took a crumpled paper from her pocket and handed it to him. He turned it to the light and read. As he did so the troubled look faded out of his face. He turned and caught her hand in both of his, crushing the letter between them as he did so.

"Why, Lilian!" he exclaimed. "Do not worry any more. It is all right. The child is alive. Your father need not fear any blame or difficulty. Everything will be settled now. Indeed, I am glad!"

He let go her hand to snatch his watch from his pocket.

"Marsh will be here in five minutes. It's all right. Your trouble is at an end. I must run around and see Mrs. Merton a moment. It is only a step, and I will be back in a few minutes. Then we will find your father. You don't know how much happiness you have given me. You have not only saved your father, but the Underwoods will have to thank you for finding their daughter. And such a daughter, too! I *must* see Mrs. Merton, if it is only for a second!"

Lilian had risen when he caught her hand, and now stood looking after him in wonder as he rushed from the room, his face glowing with pleasure. She heard him close the door and run rapidly down the steps.

"Mrs. Merton," she said to herself. "What has she to do with it! Does he have to tell her everything?—Ah!"

She uttered this exclamation with something like a gasp. She thought of his flushed face and the dancing light in his eyes as he fled away. She could think of but one explanation for it, and that was——

She covered her face with her hands and threw herself upon the lounge. A moment afterward the bell rang. Hastily rising, she went to the door and admitted Frank Marsh.

"Why, Lily!" he exclaimed, gazing anxiously at her troubled, tear-stained face. "You must not be so worried. There is really nothing to fear. It's only ten o'clock. Your father may come in any moment. Don't, dear, don't!" he added, taking her arm as he stuffed his fur cap into his pocket. How kind and sympathetic he was! She did not think of his action as an undue familiarity. It was a comfort to have him near her.

"Come now, let us talk it over," he said gently, leading her toward the library. "Is Eastman here?"

"He just went out," she replied. "O Frank, I have had an awful time—perfectly awful!"

She withdrew her arm from his clasp as she spoke, as if she had just become conscious of it.

"Don't take it so seriously, Lily. There is no ground for alarm."

"I didn't mean that," she retorted petulantly.

"What did you mean, then?"

"I mean—I've been a fool, Frank Marsh, and so have you."

"No doubt about it so far as I am concerned," answered the saucy youngster, shaking his head. "That is one of the first lessons I ever learned. If that's all you have to say to me I may as well go back to my work. Did you tell Eastman he was a fool, too?"

"Now, Frank—if you ever mention his name to me again——"

"But you told me to call him up and ask him to come."

"Yes, I know; and I'm real glad you did."

"You don't seem so."

"Oh, but I am. He says everything will be all right—the suits settled and all that, you know—and poor papa will have no more trouble."

"That's good news, I am sure."

"Isn't it?"

"But does he know where your father is?"

"No; but he thought he could find him—you and he, that is."

"But where has he gone?"

"He will be here in a few minutes. You are to wait for him."

"Oh, I am? Then I'll sit down, if you please."

They seated themselves in the very chairs Lilian and Eastman had occupied, and Marsh's irrepressible spirits bubbled over in a stream of small-talk as soon as he saw the clouds lifting from her face.

"Isn't it about time for Eastman to come?" he asked uneasily after a while.

"He'll be here presently," Lilian answered with a meaning smile.

"All right," said Marsh contentedly. "I can stand it if he can. I suppose he knows what he is about."

Lilian laughed.

"You would think so if——"

"If what?"

"If you knew——"

"Well, knew what?"

"Oh, dear!" laughed Lilian unconstrainedly. It's too funny!"

"It must be, judging from its effect. Of course, I don't know what it is."

"I wonder if I'd better tell you?"

"As you choose; you know I can wait," significantly.

"Did you ever think——"

"I have tried to sometimes, thank you; never very successfully when you were about!"

"Pshaw!" she said, pushing him playfully away. He caught her hand and held it unresistingly, almost unconsciously.

"Did you ever think that—that he was in love?"

"The most natural thing in the world; but what particular 'he' do you refer to?"

"Why, Murvale Eastman, of course."

"Of course, eh? Well, then, I *have* thought he was in love, and been very sorry for the fact, too."

"No, I don't mean that—with somebody else—Mrs. Merton, for instance?"

"Never did; but I should be very glad to know it."

"Well, it is so."

"You don't tell me? How lucky!"

"Isn't it?"

"I suppose it makes you horribly jealous?"

"Not a bit; she is one of the sweetest women in the world, and he deserves a good wife."

"A better one than you would have made him?"

"Yes."

She utters the word with a little sigh, looking down at her hand which Marsh is holding caressingly in his own.

"You never loved him?"

"I—tried to," she answered humbly.

"Tried to? Poor, little thing," said Marsh, taking her in his arms. "She has been my sweetheart ever since we were children, and can't get over her love for her old playmate! Isn't it so, Lily dear?"

She let her head fall upon his shoulder with a tired sob, "Now, Lily, what is the use of this nonsense?"

"But you know, Frank——"

"I know your father is rich, and I am dependent on what I can earn. But that is enough for the present, and it will be growing more as we grow older."

"But father would never consent——"

"Then I will run away with you."

"I wish you would," she said with a contented smile.

The bell rang and Frank Marsh went to open the door, leaving Lilian to hide her blushes and prepare to meet her former lover with composure. She waited longer than seemed needful, but no one came. She put aside the portière and looked out into the hall. The murmur of a half-whispered conversation came from the vestibule. At once apprehension for her father overpowered all other thoughts. She felt—she knew—that this whispered conversation boded evil. The color fled from her cheeks. With a hand pressed upon her heart she moved toward the vestibule. Her slippered feet made no sound. Murvale Eastman in overcoat and wraps stood talking with Frank Marsh.

"You must tell her," said the elder man, whose face was pallid even to his lips, though his quick breathing showed recent exertion.

"I cannot," replied the younger. She could not see his face, but his tone was full of agony.

"Is it about my father?" asked Lilian, stepping forward and looking from one troubled face to the other.

"O Lily," exclaimed Marsh, half-turning toward her and instinctively putting an arm about her waist, "do not be troubled; perhaps it is not so bad; we will hope for the best."

"What is it?—tell me," she said, looking steadily in the face of Murvale Eastman. She did not lean upon the arm which encircled her, nor seem conscious of Marsh's presence.

"Your father has been found," answered Eastman with mechanical directness.

"Alive?"

The word was little more than a sigh of apprehension, but her gaze did not falter.

"He has had a stroke—apoplexy, probably. He is still alive. I have called a physician. The ambulance will be here in a moment."

"Where was he?"

"In his office."

"But the door was locked; I tried it myself."

"Indeed? Yes—I—we"—confusedly—"we—we broke it open."

"But how came it to be locked?"

"Just so—well—you see—" Murvale Eastman passed his gloved hand across his face in confusion. He was not used to prevarication. He had asked himself the question when, after the policeman on the beat had given him a back, he climbed up and peering over the edge of the curtain had seen the pallid face of Wilton Kishu staring up from the dark leather of the lounge against which his form reclined. The officer had thought of it when, having heard the other's report, he had used his club to break a hole in the thick plate-glass of the door through which to thrust his arm and turn the key in the lock.

"Shure it's quare enough, it is. It was hardly dark when he kam out all by himself—not even his gum shoes on the fate of him—an' wint to the corner to pit his letters in the box. By the same token I helped him back—for the walk is glare ice, ye see—an' he give me a dollar, right here by the door, now, to drink his hilth with when I kam aff duty, ye know. Shure he must hev locked himsilf in."

Eastman sent the loquacious Irishman to ring in a call for an ambulance and bring a physician, and as soon as he had gone, had looked keenly around for evidences of the act he suspected. The ax and saw he returned to the case from which they had been taken, the door of which was still open, wondering what could be the meaning of their presence. Then his eye caught sight of the brass-bound case and the green glass globe resting on its cushioned bed. He shuddered with horror, for he knew its deadly contents. To close the case and put it under his arm beneath his overcoat was the work of an instant. He saw that the man was yet alive. The regular, though heavy, stertorous breathing told him that. He judged that the reclining position in which he had fallen, the head well raised and chest thrown out, was the best he could have. After feeling his pulse and passing his hand over the beaded brow he waited the coming of the physician, and as soon as he had learned that there was nothing more for him to do, hastened on to break the news to the family. While he hesitated, there came an impatient peal at the door-bell.

"I must warn my mother," said Lilian, alert at once to the situation. "Have him taken to his room; you know where it is, Frank."

Wilton Kishu, breathing heavily, but with a softened peaceful look upon his face, was laid upon his bed; the stricken wife sank down upon her knees beside the couch. The physician reported that there was no immediate danger. One by one the attendants and the aroused servants stole away. When Lilian asked for Murvale Eastman, he too was gone. The physician remained all night by his patient's bedside. Now and then, Frank or Lilian came from the library to hear his report.

It was well past midnight when Murvale Eastman stood upon the bridge that hung high above the frozen river. The wind blew fiercely and the snow was falling fast. The dismantled shipping lay in ghostly silence along the wharves. The electric lights shone flickeringly down upon the rough, snow-flecked, icy surface below. He remembered that a sudden freeze had bound together the massive blocks the wind had heaped upon each other. He looked sharply up and down the stream; back and forth along the lighted roadway. There was nobody in sight. He stepped back a pace or two from the parapet, drew something from his pocket, swung his arm back, leaped quickly forward, and with a thrill of horror launched a gleaming missile into the dim misty distance. It went far beyond the range of the lamplight. He clung to the parapet—looked, and listened. A flash shone back through the falling snow, sending sharp, piercing spires of light far upward toward the fleecy clouds, but smothered at the sides by the massed flocculence of falling flakes. Then there came a roar which sounded uncertain and far off amid the whirling snow-fall, yet which shook the earth with its force. A hundred policemen heard it upon their beats. Sleepers were awakened by it; but watchers and sleepers alike thought it a clap of thunder in a mid-winter snow-storm. After a moment he heard the rattle of falling fragments. Then he walked quietly homeward. The next day there was a black open place in the middle of the hard-frozen stream. Around it lay great blocks of shattered ice. Many went to see it and wondered what had caused the phenomenon. It was generally believed to be the effect of the lightning which had been heralded by the thunder.

The secret of Wilton Kishu's purpose was safely hidden in his pastor's breast. The morning papers told only of the stroke which had mercifully preserved him from worse evil, and with it linked the cheering news that recovery was regarded as probable. Only two shared the knowledge of the truth with the pastor, and they only by inference—Jonas Underwood and Joseph Lampson—and their lips were sealed, the one by gratitude and the other by remorse. The next day Murvale Eastman accompanied Mrs. Merton and her daughter to a joyful reunion with her parents in that most delightful of winter resorts, the Hotel Hygeia in Hampton Roads.

When Wilton Kishu opened his eyes to consciousness, Lampson was sitting by his bedside. He had made his appearance the day after his old employer's mishap, and with an insistence that would not be denied, had claimed the right to share the watch at his bedside.

"Is that you, Joe?" asked the sick man.

"I should like to know who else you would take me for," said the deformed man, stepping lightly on his slender legs to the bed and stretching his arm over to adjust the coverlet.

"Where am I, Joe?"

There was a little thickness about the speech and his eye was somewhat sluggish in its movements, but there was no doubt that the brain of Wilton Kishu was waking from its long slumber.

"What a notion! Where should he be except in his own room in his own house? Just take a look around you once. Did you think you were in the office? I had them bring up some of the clocks—some of the choicest, which I knew you liked the best—so you could hear them strike. I thought you'd like to hear them when you woke. It's a great pity; but they've just finished striking twelve. You go to sleep again and I'll wake you for the half-hour."

"What's the matter with me, Joe?"

"What's the matter? That's a pretty question for one to ask who has been hanging for days between life and death from such a fall as yours."

"Did I fall, Joe? Tell me about it."

"That I won't, sir, for you've got to go to sleep. The doctor was very particular that you shouldn't be allowed to talk or move until he came. Now, you just keep still and I'll go and tell Miss Lilian you are awake and want your breakfast in—let me see, shall we say twenty minutes—just when the clocks begin to strike? And what shall it be—a bit of steak and mushrooms, or toast and an egg? All right—but you must sleep now and hardly move a finger until I come back."

Whether Wilton Kishu *could* move was a question, and Lampson dwelt upon the necessity that he should not, with the distinct purpose of inducing him to make the attempt. Stepping softly out of the room he turned and peered cautiously through the portière. The sick man remained quiet for a moment, glanced suspiciously at the curtain, raised first one hand and then the other to his face, turned wearily in his bed, and then sank off into slumber.

It was enough; Wilton Kishu would recover. He might never again be as strong as before, but he would be himself.

CHAPTER XLVI.

'TWIXT DREAM AND WAKING.

THE weeks that followed showed the world to Wilton Kishu in a new light. The clouds which had seemed so dark and lowering with evil portent proved to be laden only with blessings. Many of his wealthy associates, the men whose approval he had most esteemed, knowing something of the peril that shrouded his financial affairs, held aloof, not from any lack of kindly feeling for the stricken man, but because "capital is always sensitive," as political economists phrase the cowardice that springs from possession. No doubt some of them feared they might be asked to assist him in his straits, while others may have shrunk from witnessing the grief of the family. Many such sent kindly messages during the days of oblivion, but by the time consciousness had returned, the rush of the world had half-obliterated memory of the sufferer.

But gratitude and personal regard are stronger than the links of silver and gold by which the lords of Mammon are bound together. All the acts of kindness of his life, and they were very many, seemed to bring a harvest of good cheer to the tender-hearted invalid. The poor whom he had relieved crowded his portal with blessings; the weak whom he had aided came with grateful words and proffers of service. It was wonderful how forgotten acts of benevolence bore fruit in loyal remembrance.

He was amazed, too, at the sunlight about him. There was a tenderness in his wife's ministrations, a joyousness in his daughter's manner which he could not understand. Lilian had wheedled him into giving her leave to act for him in his business while he waited for strength. Frank Marsh came and went in a matter-of-course way, and his cheerful humor whiled away many an hour and kept from the invalid's mind all annoying cares; while Lampson went in and out of the sick-room as if the responsibliity for his employer's health as well as the management of the business had suddenly devolved upon him. The sick man little imagined that these three, with the assistance and advice of others whom he had never dreamed of making confidants in his affairs, had kept the great machine of which he had been the spring and center in operation so well that the world had hardly realized that the guiding brain had slept—a soft, sweet, dreamless sleep from which it was even yet but half-awake. When he made his daughter his agent he but confirmed what had been done. There was no one else whom even in his weakened condition he would have trusted, but she was his daughter; he recognized his own powers, his own qualities, refined and etherealized in her, and knew that he could trust her judgment as he had always trusted her intuition.

All who came near him were so cheerful, too. His old friends of the Golden Lilies—Goodyear and Hodnutt and Townley—the friends of his youth—he did not know before how much he loved them. It is curious how at the end of life we go back for love to those who were with us in its beginning. However much we may gain in rank and station—however far we may go from early associations—the heart is sure to turn at length with homely longing to its early environment. And these men had not only been companions of his youth but associates of his manhood. They had run the race of life with him. True, he had outstripped them all, but they had looked upon his success without envy, even glorying not a little in the strength of their old friend. It was very sweet to have them come about his bedside and his reclining chair with such kindly cheer.

The young pastor of the Golden Lilies came too—as if nothing had ever happened to disturb their cordial relations. Mr. Kishu wondered how it all happened, if what seemed like remembrance was only a fevered dream. How kindly the *Breeze* spoke of him, too! And what cordial relations there seemed to be between it and the *Thunderbolt!* Why should there not be? Searle controlled the *Breeze* and Frank Marsh had become the inspiring spirit of the other—not its editor, but it was by this time known to all but Mr. Kishu himself that the brave, boy-hearted young fellow whom even the mishaps of unkindly love could not daunt, would marry Lilian Kishu and probably succeed to a controlling interest in the successful journal.

The time came at length when all these mysteries were made plain to the slowly-convalescing man. Among his visitors one day was Metziger. The great lawyer knew how to charm as well as to coerce. What a bracing draught of the world-life he brought into the library where the invalid sat! After all, everybody liked Wilton Kishu. Even those who laughed at his foibles or knew most of his infirmities recognized instinctively the man underneath them all. There was a strange attraction about his sturdy nature whose influence few could resist. Even what he lacked he loved; and he drew about him men of the most diverse qualities and acquirements, making them all his friends. It is true he required of them one common element—success. He hated failure; he might pity the man who failed, but the fact of failure was unpleasant to him. Only Deacon Goodyear had been able to overcome this aversion, and if *he* had failed in one direction he had succeeded in another. But success pleased Wilton Kishu; he almost reverenced it. So the coming of the busy lawyer waked him out of the long torpor, and when Metziger intimated that he would come again and talk of business, Wilton Kishu surprised himself by avowing a readiness to proceed with the matter without delay. The fate which had seemed so terrible to him a little while before, appeared now not so very deplorable a fact, after all. He would still have enough and still have his friends. What more need he desire?

It seemed strange to him that he had ever felt otherwise. Yet his nature was essentially the same. It was merely one of those miracles with which the path of life is so thickly strewn that we hardly wonder at them. The finger of God had touched some hidden spring; the physical shock had produced a readjustment of temperamental qualities which quite changed his outlook upon life, and the resultant was a modification of moral qualities.

Wilton Kishu was unaware of any change in his relation to Mr. Metziger's client, but he did not dread the outcome of the controversy as he had done before. He wondered at it, but it was a great relief. He suggested that the presence of Mr. Speedwell might be necessary. Mr. Metziger thought he might prefer under the circumstances to dispense with that gentleman's services except in the formal part of the settlement proposed.

"Settlement?" Could it be that he heard aright. He wondered if he were in his right mind—or if he had been in that shadowy and troublous past which seemed so very far away. But he said nothing.

The lawyer explained that his client Underwood was so rejoiced at the discovery of his daughter, and so satisfied that her preservation alive was due to Mr. Kishu's courageous action on the day the child was lost, that he was not only willing to condone all that had occurred, but to withdraw the suits he had begun and make good the defect of title on which the suits of the occupants against Mr. Kishu were based. This, of course, on condition that the title of the Golden Lilies was placed beyond dispute.

"So he has found his daughter?"

"Yes: did you not know? She is Mrs. Merton."

"Mrs. Merton! Not the—the——"

"Yes," laughingly, "the one all the trouble began about."

With this statement the sagacious lawyer withdrew. The experiment he had been selected to make had proved a success. Without shock or apparent peril he had switched Wilton Kishu back upon the track he had been following before the long night of torpor had fallen upon him. The half-dormant brain had, though still feeble, resumed its normal functions; apprehension was removed; and only care and rest were needed to insure complete recovery. The mist was not all dissipated, but the awakened brain could be trusted to find the light.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ALOE-BLOSSOM.

Two men sat on the wide veranda of a hotel overlooking the historic roadstead where one spring day the fate of a nation, perhaps the destiny of civilization, was determined by a struggle between two forms of a new engine of war. The more complete of these engines represented liberty; the less complete slavery. God was on the side of liberty and good workmanship, and slavery fell.

The battle between winter and summer begins early in this sheltered haven of Hampton Roads, and the sun-god halts a long time here, on his victorious northward march, to dally with the winds and waves. As soon as he was deemed able to travel, Wilton Kishu was ordered hither to recuperate. He had gained steadily from the hour he recovered consciousness, but his attack had been one of those which makes caution instinctive. It was thought advisable that he be not only relieved from anxiety, which had been done by his conversation with the lawyer, but removed for a time from familiar scenes and everything that might tend to undue excitement. His one desire was to meet his former adversary, Underwood, and thank him for his unexpected lenity. That one should surrender an incontestable title to such a magnificent property, upon terms so just and yet so self-respectful, gave him a feeling almost of reverence for the man whom he had once so cordially hated. Public opinion as well as the law would have fully justified Underwood in a course which, while making him one of the wealthiest men in the city, would have ruined his enemy. True, he was already rich, a millionaire, perhaps twice a millionaire. Garden Square itself was worth more than a million; but the Flat-iron Tract, with its palatial improvements, would have trebled Underwood's possessions.

Wilton Kishu deemed the man who from any sense of right could renounce all this, worthy of his highest regard, and was all the readier to accept the proposed exile from the city, because assured that he would meet this man, to whom he felt himself under such supreme obligation.

Jonas Underwood lived in the shadow of death. For a time after the expulsion of the foreign substance from his lung, it had seemed as if he were about to recover from the disease which had so long sapped his vital forces. But it had gone too far, and both he and his family realized that the time was not far off when the inevitable hemorrhage would come to close his earthly career. He had perhaps a few quiet months before him, but the activity his restless spirit craved was denied him. He could still think, but even this his physician discouraged, preferring that he should dream. To avoid the debilitating influences of the far South, he had been ordered to the refuge in the placid roadstead, as we know, before Wilton Kishu's illness.

So the two men met. Mr. Kishu forgot the fine speeches he had intended to make, and gazed with something like wonder at the broad shoulders, massive head, full, heavy beard and thick, dark hair which told of unusual vitality, though the frequent flushing of the pallid cheek, the shrunken hands and bowed head were evidence of coming dissolution, while the great eyes, blazing under the brows with the light of unconquerable purpose, showed a soul-force yet unabated. Mr. Kishu did not wonder any longer at what had been done by this man, who seemed capable of achieving anything he might undertake. What he did wonder was why he himself had been a success, as the world measures success, and this man a failure—or at the best an accident. In energy, purpose, the power of application and the capacity to endure, he saw at once with his fine perceptions of human nature that this man was his superior. Yet he had succeeded, while the other had faced the buffets of fortune all his life long.

Somehow the success of which Wilton Kishu had been so proud shrunk amazingly in value as he looked into this man's eyes, whose indomitable spirit a life-time of ill-fortune could not tame; whose look met every one with a quiet consciousness of power which needed not to be translated into speech. He had expected to meet a mild, meek man, such as the saints are usually depicted; he found one fit to sway an empire, and who could not cringe or fawn. He had seen many great men, but met few whose greatness owed nothing to the accident of wealth or station. This man was a king by divine right, to whom crown or purple could add nothing. He wondered that he had not recognized these qualities before, forgetting that He who moistened the eyes of the blind with clay had touched his, now, with adversity.

With the curious inconsistency which strong natures so often exhibit, these two, antipodal in qualities and experience, became at once almost inseparable. They said nothing of the past, not much even of themselves; but day after day they loitered on the verandas, sometimes walking side by side, sometimes sitting together in the sunshine; sometimes conversing, but more often silent, each quite content so long as the other were near. Mrs. Kishu could hardly believe that the gentle, complaisant man who yielded everything to the low-voiced stranger, could be the positive, masterful husband she had known. She soon tired of wondering at the miracle, however, and, satisfied that it was beneficial to the invalid, was careful not to interrupt their intercourse. Mrs. Underwood wandered contentedly about with a dark-eyed child who called her Grandma; and Mrs. Merton and Lilian, as directors-general of their respective parties, rarely lost sight of the invalids.

Mr. Kishu improved rapidly, and Mr. Underwood's pale cheeks were tinged with a glow as soft as the spring sunsets. Metziger came now and then for consultation. Eastman's yacht rode quietly at anchor in the roads, save when its owner sought relief from his multifarious duties in beating up into the wind's teeth or flying swiftly before its invisible pursuit; for he had been making up for the lost vacation of the summer before by one or two days' sail in each week during the spring, and very naturally he had made the roadstead where the two family groups were staying the scene of his recreation. Mr. Kishu was to remain—as long as he was content. The only limit set to his stay was that he must return to the city for his daughter's wedding in the latter part of May. Frank Marsh had stipulated for this when he took the city editorship of the *Thunderbolt*, of which he was to be manager when the bridal trip was over. Jonas Underwood made no plans for his own future. One morning he brought out a roll of papers which he placed upon the floor beside the great rocker in which he sat. He looked worn and jaded. Wilton Kishu had that complacent manner and air of rugged physical health which so often accompany recovery from mental shock. People said the sea air had done wonders for him.

One by one the loiterers on the sunlit porch dropped off to their own amusements and left the two men to themselves.

"I want to show you something," said Underwood hesitantly, reaching down for the roll of papers beside his chair—"the plans of a building I think of putting up. I've got more money than a man can have any use for, and I thought I would see if I couldn't invest some of it where it would add to the general stock of human happiness—make an attempt at least to better some social conditions."

"When a man has enough to live on comfortably, all he gathers afterward is mere bother," answered Kishu sententiously. "All the enjoyment one gets out of a fortune is the getting of it—winning the game, you know. But that's a good deal," he added composedly.

"I suppose it must be so," responded Underwood. "I never had that pleasure. My fortune came to me without exertion: my efforts to secure one were always unfortunate. So I have to get my enjoyment out of spending it."

"Well, there's a good deal of pleasure in that if—if one keeps within his income; a man ought never to go beyond that." This had been the philosophy of his life.

"But I am going to spend the principal—the whole of it, too!"

"Make an investment, you mean—what is it?"

"I am going to try and build an addition to other people's homes."

"A good many of them need it," answered the great financier thoughtfully.

"That is what I think; and my idea is just this, to try and bring society and the family nearer together. It will never do," he continued, leaning forward and laying one hand upon the knee of his companion, "to disturb or restrict the family. That is the ark of safety—the sheet-anchor of true progress—the unit of all healthful society. And I believe our American family, with its freedom from restraint, which allows each individual member to order his own life in his own way almost as soon as he arrives at years of discretion, is the very best type of family. It is individuality that blesses the world, not uniformity. Our boys and girls are not like those of other countries; they are not formed on a specific model; they have more self-reliance and individuality, and these are what count in the long run, always. They are what make our American life a new and better type than the world has known before. It has its faults, but when we average it up all round, it is the best, thus far. Now, there is no use in going back into ancient history to find rules and hints for its betterment. There is no such a thing as a fixed and divine social order. What is good for one land is bad for another; and what fits one set of conditions would be fatal to all progress with other surroundings. Society is only the house we live in, the hive that protects and shelters or cramps and restricts the workers, and what constitutes the best form of hive depends on the character of the workers. The one that fits a Russian, a Frenchman, or an Englishman won't do for an American."

"That's a fact," said his companion with emphatic approval.

"Now, there isn't a doubt, to my mind, that the shell we've been wearing has come to pinch us in a good many places; but there isn't any sense in throwing it away or trying to borrow or invent a new one. We are not soldier crabs. People have to make their own houses, grow up in their own shells, provide their own social environment. If they try to adapt themselves to others, the attempt weakens, unmans, and destroys what is best in them. If you force a social shell too suddenly on a people, you destroy their individuality and make them mere counterfeits of something they can never really become."

"That seems reasonable—very reasonable, I should say," Mr. Kishu responded, evidently thinking he was required to say something, and having quite lost the desire to differ with any one.

"Of course; that is the reason, I take it, why some of our Anglo-Saxon colonization schemes are so fatal to the peoples among whom they are launched. We carry our social shell—our manner of life—along with us, and insist on fitting it to all other lives; and the life that will not submit to it we destroy. For all the charity it boasts, our English civilization has been a more destructive force among the peoples of the world than the Mohammedan scimitar. Of course, the plea has been all the time that we were removing a worse life to make room for a better one—destroying barbarism to plant in its place civilization. But has civilization any right to destroy the barbarian in order to make new opportunity for the civilized man? Have the strong a right to destroy the weak, the good a right to annihilate the bad? Has the civilized child of God a right to impose destructive conditions upon God's less favored or immature children? That is the question of to-day. Yesterday, nobody doubted it. It was admitted to be the duty of civilization to take and hold the earth, regardless of incumbrances. We offered to barbarism an impossible alternative. We said to the

Indian, the Negro, the Sandwich Islander, to the weaker, dusky peoples of all the lands we coveted: "Give us what we desire; become civilized; accept our forms of life and government; give up what you prize—or we will kill you. If you accept our terms, you must furnish a market for our rum and opium and submit to our lust and rapacity. If you cannot stand before our civilization under those conditions, you must accept it as the will of God that you should disappear from the face of the earth."

"I suppose that is so, Mr. Underwood, but what has that got to do with the plans you spoke of? There aren't any heathen about here."

"True enough; but the philosophy which has justified, defended, and exalted Anglo-Saxon civilization, in spite of its terrible record of slaughter and destruction of the weak, has now turned itself upon our own life, don't you see?"

"I—I don't believe I do—exactly——"

"What we call 'the law of civilization' has been that we had the right to seize the lands, destroy the government and social system of any weaker people and require them to adopt ours—and if they grew restive or resisted, kill them. This was on the theory that an uncivilized people have no rights a civilized people are bound to respect, or in other words that strong peoples have a right not only to control weak ones, but to prescribe what is best for them and under what conditions they may be permitted to live. This we call 'the immutable law of progress.'

"We know that such a philosophy of life is fit only for hell, where duty does not exist and selfishness is the law. It has colored our American thought, however, and made reason almost powerless against the impulse of the strong to destroy the weak. Of course, everybody knows that the true function of civilization is *to elevate, not to destroy*. The function of Christianity is to protect the weak, not to marshal them for destruction or stand idly by and see them annihilated.

"This idea—that the strong have, somehow, a right to control the weak—used to be a question of race, nationality, or class, but now it is a question of individuals. We think a rich man not blamable if he uses his power so as to make another poor and weak and wretched, so long as he does not do it in a way the law expressly forbids."

"Why should he be blamed?" asked the other in surprise.

"Because he is unjust. A peasant might better have contended anciently with the lord of the manor for his rights, than for a man of small means to compete with the possessor of millions to-day. As a result, the big fish are constantly swallowing the little ones, and are themselves growing greater and fewer. All forms of business are going into the control of fewer and fewer men. The small manufactory, designed to supply an adjacent region, has almost disappeared. Of self-employers, the proportion is daily growing less; of wage laborers, who are always to some degree dependents, the proportion is rapidly increasing. A generation ago few men expected to be wage-earners for life; now, hardly as great a ratio of workers expect to become anything else."

"That is true—very true," said the other with a childish eagerness, which showed awakening interest in the subject.

"This tendency works both ways," said Underwood huskily, for his interest and his effort began to tell on him. "Not only are there proportionably fewer of the employing, directing, controlling class each year, and more and more of the employed and dependent class, but the competition is growing sharper and opportunity rarer, especially in the higher walks of labor, and the more intelligent are being forced gradually but surely down into the class of routine laborers. The son of the man who is a cashier will be a clerk, and his son a porter. A generation ago, few men fell below the level on which they began life; to-day the tendency is largely the other way. The burdens of life have grown heavier and its opportunities more restricted. What were luxuries then have become necessities now. The workman is crowded into the city. The home has shrunk in dimensions and increased in cost. Distance means expense. The struggle for life brings isolation or loss of self-respect. The children of the man who a generation ago grew up self-reliant and ambitious, esteeming himself the peer of the best, are content now if they keep away want and escape the burdens of society."

"True—too true; but what—what are you going to do about it? Found a hospital?" He touched the roll of drawings the other held as he spoke.

"A hospital? Well, yes—a hospital for sick families. I'll tell you, Mr. Kishu, I want to do something that will help improve present conditions if it is only by way of example, and that cannot possibly do harm."

"Those are very hard conditions," said the other doubtfully.

"They are; but I believe what Mr. Eastman says, that Christian Socialism is merely an extension of Christian individualism, that the world is made better not merely by collective effort, but by the stimulation of individual endeavor. One of the difficult problems of our time, as it seems to me, is to find some practical substitute for the old relation of *neighborship*. It did not mean mere vicinity; it was a willingness to aid—arising not merely from kindness, but from a recognized mutuality of relation. To-day, there is no neighborhood nor neighborship. There may be friends, cronies, partners, but there are no neighbors."

"And never will be again," with a sigh.

"Perhaps not, but I am going to make my contribution to Christian Socialism an effort toward providing a substitute for it."

The other shook his head hopelessly.

"Well," said Underwood, stroking his beard and with something of tremulousness in his voice, "it may be a failure, but I am going to try. What is the first element of neighborship? Evidently, frequent but not enforced friendly meetings, growing and ripening sometimes into friendship, at other times remaining mere casual acquaintance, according to mutual inclination. What are the obstacles to the growth of neighborship, in a great city? The lack of opportunity for such meetings and their natural ripening into friendship. Entertainment is a serious matter to people of moderate means. House-room, service, equipment, are all burdens heavy to be borne. The space that would serve the family must be doubled for society; and one night's entertainment means the investment of a year's income in what is otherwise almost needless and unused. But entertainment is all there is left of society.

"The rich have tried to solve the problem by the club and restaurant. What I propose to do is to build a clubhouse, not for the poor exactly, but for those who wish a common meeting-ground at moderate expense, a place where they can come to spend an hour or an evening; where one can give a family dinner, an evening party, or a social entertainment of any sort, without overtaxing his ability."

"You would admit both men and women, then?"

"Men, women, and children—families, sir. Why not? You have families in a neighborhood; why not families in a club?"

"I don't know."

"There is no reason. This now is my plan, or rather the architect's plan, for housing my idea, though I must confess that a good deal of it is due to Mr. Lampson. He seems to understand it better than I, and has suggested things I never thought of. I want him to have the management of it—its general direction I mean—when it is under way, and I want you to help me get it started, Mr. Kishu. I'm feeling pretty well now, and folks think I've plenty of time before me, but I know I haven't. I shall drop off suddenly when I go; and it won't be a very great while before the time comes."

"But you know—I—I am not very strong myself," said Kishu wistfully.

"I know that, but you'll outlast me by years."

Mr. Kishu shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, here's the plan." Underwood unwound the roll and laid it open on their knees. "Here, you see, this large room is a common meeting-room—books, papers, writing-desks, flowers, a public parlor arranged for semi-privacy in groups. No speeches, entertainments, music, or anything of a public character here, unless now and then a public reception. The members come and go, and talk or simply wait for each other. On the other floors are dining-rooms, parlors, a gymnasium, and at the very top a play-room and a nursery."

"Play-room and nursery?"

"Certainly. Did I not say it was a family club? You wouldn't leave the mothers and children out, would you? One of the most pitiable phases of city life is the young mother who cannot afford a nurse. She is barred of all society, perhaps for years, by the duties of maternity. One of the very things I had in view was to provide a place where she may leave her child contentedly, go out and do a bit of shopping, or make a few calls, come back and have a lunch with a friend perhaps, and then go home and get supper for her husband, meeting him fresh and restful after his day's work."

"You would have a restaurant, of course?"

"At this end," said Underwood, moving his finger along the draft.

"What will it furnish?"

"I leave that mainly to experience to decide. Certainly nothing that will harm. I should say plain food of the best quality at the nearest possible approach to cost. Remember, the whole thing is intended to supply needs and not to invite patronage or tempt indulgence."

"It would provide dinners and suppers, I suppose, for parties who might wish to entertain friends?"

"Of course, but restricted as to cost. It must not tempt to luxury and must provide nothing that a man of moderate means may not feel able to enjoy."

"Do you think that would be satisfactory?"

"I don't know: my idea is to make an annex of the home—to provide opportunity for association, not to cheapen luxury or invite dissipation. I would have every member feel as free from oppressive obligation to minister to the physical enjoyments of others as if in his own home."

"And who will be members?"

"Those whom the Board of Managers see fit to admit, under such conditions and on such terms as they may provide."

"It is not intended to be gratuitous, then?"

"Certainly not: it is designed to cultivate independence and self-respect, not to destroy them."

"I see—I see: and the smaller rooms?" Mr. Kishu's interest was increasing.

"These are to be let to members, for any social purpose that may be desired. A family or group of families may rent one for a day, a week, a year, or one day in a week or a month. This leaves every one at liberty to select his own company and arrange his own entertainment, but gives his family for a mere trifle the enjoyment of comforts that it would take half his income, perhaps, to secure otherwise. It would enable a car-driver to give a family party with comfortable and refined surroundings, which in his own home would require an income of thousands."

"It seems feasible if—if the right sort of people take hold of it!"

"Metziger says five hundred families of moderate means but of the best character and of high intelligence will have their names on the roll before the first story is complete."

"It is to be a sort of annex to the League, I suppose?"

"Not at all. It is an individual attempt, not to establish a new form of society, but to improve the conditions of a specific social group."

"Suppose it should fail?"

"The managers will have authority to apply it or its income to some similar purpose. It will always yield a good revenue."

"Where do you propose to put it?"

"On the end of Garden Square—next to the church."

"It will spoil the park," said Kishu regretfully. The park had always been to him the setting of the Church of the Golden Lilies.

"So far as my ancestor's purpose is concerned, it was spoiled long ago, and I am not at all sure that such a limited space is of much value as a park, at the best. It is too small to accommodate all, and the least deserving are apt to monopolize it."

"Have you chosen a name for it?"

"Yes—the Valentine Social Club."

"After your grandfather?"

"Of course; he is the real donor. I am only acting as his agent. I would like D X V to be carved upon the keystone above the main entrance. But for that, you know, I should never have been able to do this."

"I see," said Mr. Kishu, flushing slightly. "It will take a good deal of money upon the scale it has been planned."

"It is to be made plain, you know—just brick and iron; for service, not for ornament."

"True, but it is a very large building." He was scrutinizing the plan as he spoke.

"I guess there will be enough over and above what Hannah and I will require," said Underwood with a quiet smile.

"But your—your daughter?"

Mr. Kishu spoke with evident embarrassment.

"She has enough. Besides, we thought that—perhaps—well, if we gave it to her it might make public some things which may as well not be talked about."

"You mean——" anxiously.

"It doesn't matter what I mean, Mr. Kishu. It's all over, and the past is buried. You will never hear any more about it if I can prevent."

Mr. Kishu stretched out his hand and Underwood grasped it cordially.

"You see, I want you to be one of the trustees," he made haste to say, noting the other's emotion.

"I'll do it," said the other with enthusiasm, "and I'll make it a success if it can be done!"

"I know you will; I only want you to keep in mind three things which I wish the experiment to prove: First, that social co-operation is practicable without interfering with the family; second, that it is possible to counteract, in some degree at least, the unhealthful social tendencies of city life; and, third, that such a substitute for neighborship is a distinct economic as well as moral and social advantage. If this succeeds, others will enlarge and perfect the idea."

"You do not seem to realize how much you are giving away."

"I don't suppose I do," answered Underwood. "I think this is why God gave me control of money when I was beyond the reach of temptation to needless accumulation. Perhaps, too, this was why he let me see how grievous life may become, without actual want, in the face of conditions which mean constant humiliation and inevitable lessening of self-respect. I am no better than I was a year ago, yet those who would have regarded me with indifference then, treat me now with deference. This is a wrong to every man who stands where I then did. It is the result of a relaxed sense of neighborship as well as an unreasoning worship of wealth. I cannot change that feature of our life—it has become an inherited defect; but perhaps I can show some of those who stand where I did how these evils may be in part avoided, and one thing will lead to another, until men may grow ashamed to heap up gains merely for the sake of acquiring, and more than enough may grow to be as great a reproach as a lack of sufficiency now is. Then men will not be tempted to rob and steal and starve their fellows in order to be esteemed their superiors."

"But I—I—" stammered Mr. Kishu, turning pale—"I did not——"

"I was not thinking of you," answered Underwood in some confusion.

"But I was thinking," said Mr. Kishu, with something of his old readiness in avoiding what was unpleasant, "that perhaps I might find some way to help undo the wrong I have done."

"Not the wrong you have done, but the evils of that social system which tempts all men to do harm to others rather than good, as a condition of popular approval. I do not doubt but you will find ways enough to help undo this evil. The tendency of society hitherto has been centripetal; we must make the popular impulse centrifugal. Diffusion, not concentration, must be the watchword. We must encourage small producers. Advantage must be joint, rather than several. Self-employment must be the aim. The laborer must become a part-proprietor; as fast as he does, the conflict betwixt labor and capital disappears, while enterprise is not checked but fostered. Every man is stimulated to do his utmost. Instead of a business making one man rich, it will cause many to be comfortable and independent. It makes competency the desire of all instead of wealth the aim of the few. It is a mistake to think rich men are necessary to great enterprises. A hundred men having ten thousand dollars apiece can do more than one man with a million, if they are workers, and work together. Why? Because there are a hundred pair of eyes to watch for leaks and waste. It is this which we must strive for, not as an end but as a means—the diffusion of interests with combination of action. For myself, I hate the mere laborer—the man of wages who expects and desires nothing else. He is a symptom of disease—better than a slave, but the lowest type of a freeman. You know what Townley is doing?"

Mr. Kishu shook his head.

"It is altogether a new idea. He studied it out himself and began operations without telling any one what he intended to do."

"That's business," said Kishu approvingly; "and it's Townley, too, all over. He's one of the worst men to tackle in the whole country, but straight as a ramrod and true as a die."

"Well, he has devoted himself and his fortune—I suppose he has three or four million——"

"Nearer four than five."

"Whatever it may be, he has devoted it and himself to promoting profit-sharing. How does he do it? In pretty much every way, I think. He says it has to be applied in a different way to different occupations. He has made his big carpet manufactory a profit-sharing establishment, and has now arranged to sell it out and out to the employés. It is a very elaborate scheme; he and Metzige worked it out. It is so arranged that nobody can get hold of the stock except employés, and no one of them can get more than ten thousand dollars. When one dies or goes out of the works, the company or some other employé takes his share, paying an assessed valuation. I can't tell you the details, but Townley says the result will be that inside of twenty years the whole establishment will belong to the people who work in it; there will be three or four hundred proprietors instead of one, and only a hundred or two simple employés instead of four or five hundred."

"That looks practical and fair," said Kishu interestedly.

"He don't stop there," continued Underwood. "He takes his capital and goes at it to induce others to adopt the same plan. He finds a man who is willing to sell his business at a fair appraisal and then gets the workmen to form an association and buy, he advancing what capital may be required to start the enterprise. Of course he requires frequent reports and maintains a constant supervision until he gets his money out of it, and that pretty much insures success. He says if he lives ten years longer he is going to kill ten thousand wage-workers and create ten thousand working-proprietors."

"I'll bet he'll do it, too," said Kishu enthusiastically. "Ezekiel Townley is a hard man to head when he gets set on a thing, and there's no reason why a man with his capital should not do exactly what he has undertaken."

"He has established a new business, too. He made Weldon, who lost his place by becoming a member of the League, his inspector of accounts, and the result is that he has formed a bureau of supervision of accounts, which is in itself a profit-sharing association, that makes regular inspections of accounts for business houses. They are likely to make a right good thing of it, I hear. I have always wondered why profit-sharing was not applied to mercantile agencies and all such forms of business where intelligence and character are the greatest share of the capital invested."

"Hodnutt has gone into something of the kind, hasn't he?"

"Yes; he has started a profit-sharing Employment Association. I don't know exactly how it works; but it is on a plan of Deacon Goodyear's."

"It's bound to be a good one, then."

"Of course; and he and Hodnutt are working it. They receive applications, make examinations of character, fitness, and capacity, and find places for all sorts of people who are either too poor or have not the tact to find or make places for themselves. It is a queer sort of a thing, as I understand it. Hodnutt furnishes the money, pays the employés, and decides everything. The one seeking employment agrees that a certain percentage of his wages for a specific time shall be paid to the Association, and the employer agrees to pay it. Sometimes they arrange partnerships and find opportunities for men of small capital or those who wish to invest in small enterprises or start profit-sharing establishments. For this they receive fees which are agreed on. They employ a lawyer, and do everything not only ship-shape but above-board, so that every one has confidence in them."

"I should think they might, with two such men as Hodnutt and Goodyear in it; but what do you mean by making it profit-sharing?"

"That puzzled me, too, but it seems they found a way. Hodnutt said he would have nothing to do with such a matter unless it was a money-making concern. So everybody engaged in it has a salary. These and all expenses are paid in cash, Hodnutt advancing enough to do that. At the end of the year it pays interest on the advancement, ten per cent. to a reserve fund, and divides half the balance between its own employés and the other half among those for whom it has found places, in the proportion of each one's contribution."

"But suppose there is a loss?" interposed Kishu cautiously.

"Hodnutt said he was willing to back it for a year or two—long enough to give it a fair trial, you know. He thought it ought to become self-supporting in ten years, but he tells me now that he thinks the reserve fund will pay it out in five years and the whole thing will belong to those who operate it."

"It seems to me," said the other shrewdly, "that the rich people are expected to carry the big end of the log in everything these Christian Socialists propose, after all."

"Hardly in this case. Hodnutt's shrewdness, Goodyear's character, Metziger's ability as consulting counsel, and the labor of all its employés represent a much greater element of success than the money advanced. But suppose it were true, why should not that be so? Why should not the rich provide the material element for the improvement of general conditions? Individual surplus has always been the material foundation of progress. Government rests on taxation. Schools and churches require money. All of the material support of such agencies of progress is derived from somebody's surplus. Sometimes it is voluntarily given; sometimes involuntarily. When voluntarily obtained, it represents the impulse of the possessor; when involuntarily bestowed, the popular impulse. We say the rich support these things. It is a mistake. The quarter of a million people who own one-half the wealth of the United States do not pay half the taxation nor furnish half the support for its schools and churches.

"But let that pass. Why should not the rich do more good than others? They are stronger: they are not weighed down with care for to-morrow; why should they not use their surplus power as well as their surplus wealth to promote the general welfare?"

"I never thought of that," said Kishu meditatively.

"Hitherto they have built schools and churches and hospitals, generally by bequest. What is needed now is not so much education as exemplification. The philanthropist of the next century will not be the man who hoards during a life-time to endow a charitable use after he is dead. Such a man will be either despised or pitied as a man who knew his duty but shirked it. The man who will be counted worthy of remembrance will be the one who puts his brain and his conscience into his accumulations, and makes them living forces for the welfare, not of himself alone, but of those who share with him the toils of production. Christian Socialism simply expects a man to use his *surplus*—not what is required to secure comfort and abundance for himself and his family, but the *surplus* of power and capacity—to promote the general welfare and prosperity of which his descendants will be joint heirs with all his fellows."

"What do you think there is for me to do?" asked Kishu, after a moment's silence.

"That every one must find out for himself."

"The League does not expect to compel acceptance of its ideas, then?"

"There is a certain amount of compulsion in all society. Free schools, public asylums and the like, are all instances of compulsory maintenance of ameliorating agencies. But they are the result of a general impulse, and until such general impulse is established all progress toward the betterment of general conditions must be by voluntary individual effort. The better part of progress is voluntary and individual, anyhow. It is when men come to rely on inert organic agencies for good that evil becomes oppressive."

"I see: and I think I should like to take part in that. I should like to establish some great economic agency which would have to fight its way to success, but would keep on blessing those who need help for generations."

"Why don't you talk with Dr. Phue?"

"Has he got a notion of doing something, too?"

"Oh, bless you, yes. The dear old saint seems to think his life has been about as unprofitably spent as I do mine, and now he has hardly time to talk about the plan of salvation. He says he's too busy working it out to think about its details. His mind is so full of the idea of the Lord being a *present* help that he has gone into that low life down around the old church, and he is gathering pennies and storing up prayers in the hope of getting back the old building, and establishing there a sort of home-annex similar to the one I have outlined, only, of course, the charitable element will enter into it to some extent. It's a hard job, but he seems to think he will succeed. You might help him."

"Of course," answered Kishu frankly, "I'll help him—that is, I will give something toward it; but I can't do much in such a work—I'm not suited to it. That's where you ought to put Lampson. He'll keep your club in hot water. He's not an easy man to get on with, and the manager of such a club must not have nerves too near the surface. But he and Dr. Phue would hit it off nicely, and he has a way of getting hold of such people as he would meet there which is truly wonderful."

"I had not thought of that; perhaps you are right."

"I am sure I am. Better let him go there, and Searle and I will pick out somebody for the other place. I think he's got the very man in his office—one who has been doing newspaper work for twenty years and never had a quarrel with anybody. That's the kind of man you want—steady, methodical, and a gentleman, with a temper that doesn't lash itself into foam with every breath of irritation."

"Well, you know what's needed," said Underwood, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes; I know what others can do and what I can do myself. I'd like to do something that would please you and be a credit to me. Haven't you some idea that can be worked up to meet those conditions? I never was good at finding things: I've nearly always utilized others' ideas!"

"Mr. Eastman has a plan," answered Underwood, "which he says is just waiting for some man with nerve and brain and money enough to carry into effect."

"What is that?"

"Well, he says that these great establishments which include all sorts of traffic and control a whole army of dependents are Gibraltars of harmful tendency. They are, he maintains, destroying the small tradesmen and the small manufacturer and making the manual laborer an absolute dependent. He insists that the profits of such enterprises ought not to go to one alone, but to many; that the small manufacturer ought to have an equal chance in the market with the large one, and that the hand-laborer ought not to be compelled to become a dependent in order to find a market for his wares. He says the difficulty does not lie in concentration or organization, but in such organization being controlled for one man's advantage."

"He thinks the salesman and worker should be part owners?"

"He insists that the greatest profit does not lie in concentration of ownership, but in its diffusion, because a man working for himself will be more careful, more industrious, and less wasteful than the mere laborer."

"There is no doubt of that."

"So he thinks the highest economy in trade will be attained when many profit-sharing concerns are grouped together with a common pay and accounting department and common rent and delivery. This would give the small manufacturer a fair market under his own name; give the hand-worker in a garret a chance to compete with the employer of wage-labor; secure to the small merchant a chance to compete with the rich one, and open a way for the constant and natural evolution of the faithful, industrious, and competent worker into a self-employer."

"And he is right, too," exclaimed Kishu with enthusiasm.

"I confess the scheme is too intricate for me. I cannot see through it."

"But I can: I suppose because my experience has been in the line of dependent and related enterprises. Each business pays for room, light, heat, packing, accounting, delivery, and the like at established rates, and shares in the profit after interest and expenses according to the amount contributed by each. Then each business does the same with its contributory elements, capital, labor, skill. By and by skill and labor buy out capital—which, being always strong, seeks a new field. I will show you the difference. Hornblower has two thousand employés in his great emporium business. He is worth five million. In twenty years more he will probably be worth five times as much and have ten times as many dependents. If he were at the head of such an establishment as Mr. Eastman has in mind, he would probably not more than double his capital in that time, but the other fifteen millions would go into the pockets and homes of the other contributors to his success. Or rather they might buy him out in ten years and there would be a thousand joint proprietors instead of one owner and many servants."

"I suppose it would require a new and complex system of operation," commented Underwood.

"New! It needs nothing new—no new method, I mean—only an intelligent use of existing methods with a strong enough hand on the lever and a large enough balance in the bank. I see it all!"

He sprang up and walked vigorously up and down the porch. "What are you going to do with the rest of Garden Square, Underwood?" he asked finally, turning sharply on his companion.

"Nothing."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will put that in at a fair value, I'll put a temple of trade and industry on it that will help more men up the ladder to independence than any half-dozen establishments in the city can drag down. This plan won't make as many very rich men as the old one, but I think it will make more honest, contented, self-respecting, and independent men than the old way ever could. And *I* don't see as it can do anybody any harm."

"I'll give the land to Mr. Eastman to do with as he pleases."

"All right. I could not ask a better partner. We'll put up a building there that will dwarf even your club house, and fill it from basement to peak with enterprising people who will make a success of it."

"I envy you the power to achieve," said Underwood, looking at the other admiringly.

"You have done much more than I ever can," responded Kishu, looking earnestly at his friend.

"I have done nothing—only wished to do."

"You forget that the Belt & Cross-Cut Company have determined to declare a regular dividend every year and allow the employés to select two of the board of directors?"

"Yes," answered Underwood, "I am one of those they chose the first year."

"And it is an honor any man may be proud of, sir, and you have well deserved it; but for you it would never have been done."

"Ah, that was Eastman's work; I could never have managed those fellows."

"But Mr. Eastman says he should never have thought of moving in the matter, if it had not been for his conversations with you."

"He gives me too much credit," replied Underwood gloomily. "The others did it all; I could only sit by and watch their work."

"I don't like to hear you talk that way," said Kishu impetuously. "Let me tell you something: if you had not lain sick in the study of the church, and he had not had the support of your claim as the heir of Valentine, Murvale Eastman would be without a pulpit to-day, and the League of Christian Socialists would be only another dream to be laughed at by the wise!"

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"Who would have thought those days of helplessness would be worth more to the world than all the rest of my life! Though after all I was only the match that fired the train."

"If you were the match, the rest of us are the train, and the spark should not be envious of the powder."

"I guess you are right," said Underwood, laughing. "The idea is not a bad one, either, only I was not the match—just the extreme end of the fuse that had been centuries in preparation, and the spark that finally lit it blew over the ages from Olivet. Do you know, Mr. Kishu, that your Christ-head in the Golden Lilies first set me to thinking of these things rather than grumbling about them?"

"Is that so?" exclaimed Kishu. "I'm glad of it. I feel as if I were almost at quits with you now."

"Yes, we are instruments of the same great thought. You heard what happened at one of Mr. Eastman's down-town talks on Christian Socialism, I suppose?"

The other shook his head.

"Well, he was telling something of the history and explaining the doings and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth, his goodness and sympathy for the oppressed and suffering, when a man on one of the front seats who had been a most attentive listener, shouted, 'Three cheers for that man from Nazareth! He's the best one yet!'"

"He was right, too," said Kishu emphatically. "The Christian idea of the duty of love has been at the bottom of all progress since it was uttered."

"And before too," added Underwood. "For before it fell from his lips, it had been planted in the heart of man—the principle of divine and eternal justice to his fellow."

"I used to think," said Mr. Kishu meditatively, "that God did all the good in the world, and man did only evil: but I am beginning to believe that all that God does is to give man a chance to do right, and then scourge him until he does it; and that the difference between progress and retrogression is just the difference between a wise man and a fool."

"Knows when he's had enough, eh?"

"That's it."

"And we—we are beginning to be wise?" asked Underwood with an arch glance at his friend's face.

"Exactly!"

The two men laughed heartily at this quaint philosophy, which after all is only a paraphrase of the immutable axiom that "Wisdom is justice, and justice wisdom."

"Looks as if they were growing young again, doesn't it," said Lilian Kishu to Mrs. Merton, nodding toward the two whose conversation we have followed, from the corner of the piazza where they were sitting. "Papa hasn't seemed so much like himself since he had his stroke. Wasn't it strange that our sorrow brought your happiness?"

"I am afraid," answered Mrs. Merton, following her glance, "that it will not be for long."

"What do you mean? Is he not making plans and laying out new work?"

"Yes—plans for others to execute. We hoped he would give up thinking after he had fully informed Mr. Eastman and Mr. Metziger of his purposes."

"Is that why they have been here so much? I was in hopes that Murvale—I can't help calling him that—" Lillian added in answer to her friend's glance, "had come for a very different purpose."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I did—truly and honestly. He ought to have fallen in love with you instead of with me at the outset. You would make just the right kind of a wife for him."

"Thank you," with a smile.

"But I mean it. I'd tell him so if I thought it would do any good, but I suppose he'll never marry now; the Church and the League are all he can find room for in his heart."

"You think so?"

"Well, Frank says they are more than enough to fill one cracked organ of that kind; but I don't believe in broken hearts—in these days at least, do you?"

"I don't believe Murvale Eastman's is broken, anyhow," laughed Mrs. Merton.

"Oh, you don't?" suspiciously. "Perhaps he has asked you to mend it for him?"

"He never has; and if he had I shouldn't have undertaken the task. Hearts that break are not worth mending."

"Poor fellow! I'm sorry you think so," answered Lilian with a sigh. She rose as she spoke and went and leaned over her father's chair.

Mrs. Merton's gaze as she looked past them fell upon a yacht that was dancing over the laughing waters with a good breeze stretching every inch of canvas. She gave a start as she recognized it. She knew instinctively its name, and who it was that stood at the wheel. She knew, too, why it was that the little sloop which had sailed away the day before was unexpectedly coming back to the anchorage it had visited every week for a month past. There had been many pleasant trips upon Eastman's jaunty yacht, and even the invalids had spent many delightful hours upon her deck. But yesterday he had said goodby; so at least they all supposed. His spring outing, her owner had said, was over, and he was going back to his work. Yet here was the *Galatea*, with her white wings spread, speeding back to the accustomed haven.

As Mrs. Merton watched it a picture floated before her eyes. There had been a late ring at her door one evening in the last mid-winter, and she had answered the bell herself.

"O Letty!" Mr. Eastman had said excitedly, as he entered without asking leave. "I have something so wonderful to tell you!"

He had never called her by her given name before. She did not feel any surprise, only a great gladness. Somehow she seemed always to have been expecting that he would some time address her thus. She led the way into the sitting-room, turned up the lights in the chandelier, and read the letter he put into her hands—the letter which Mrs. Espey had written to Mrs. Kishu. It needed no interpretation.

"Well?" she said, turning toward him inquiringly.

"Do you recognize the handwriting?"

"Certainly."

"And you know——" he blushed and stammered.

"Who the undutiful child was? Surely you do not need to ask?"

"Of course—but—does she—do you—know who she *is?*"

"Is it a riddle?" she asked with a smile.

"I do not mean that; but—do you know whose daughter she is?"

She had turned a look of wide-eyed wonder upon him at this inquiry. His face was pale and his eyes were full of anxious light. He had whispered one word and the mystery of her life had flashed upon her. There was no reason why she should faint. She was not given to such folly; but all at once the room seemed to whirl around; then it grew dark and she felt herself sinking down into space, yet without any fear of falling. It was but a second. When she opened her eyes she was sitting in a chair and Murvale Eastman was bending over her with a look in his eyes that she had never seen before.

She had made excuse for her weakness that evening and he had told her that he must hurry back; he had made the discovery of her identity only five minutes before, when called to help in the search for Mr. Kishu, who had been missing since morning. He would come again and let her know if he was found before midnight; if not, early in the morning, as he supposed she would wish to make arrangements to go immediately to her parents. An hour afterward he had returned, his face joyous and exultant, with only a shade of uncertainty upon it. He had stayed and talked with her for an hour, explaining all that had occurred. The next day he had gone with her to meet those from whom she had been so long separated. That new-found happiness had occupied her thought and life ever since, but had never obliterated the memory of the look she had surprised upon his face when she came back out of the shadows. She had seen it often since. They had been much together; he had uttered no word of love, but the look in his eyes had grown deeper and tenderer. She knew that the time would come when he would again call her by her name.

Her father came and stood beside her as Mr. Kishu left the gallery leaning on his daughter's arm.

"Is not that Mr. Eastman's yacht?" she asked, extending her hand and pointing over the rail.

"Bless me! I believe it is," was the reply. "What can he be coming back for?"

She made no reply. He took her hand and held it, patting it affectionately.

"Why, how the opal glows!" he said, looking down upon it. "There must be some good fortune near you, little Allie."

The lost child had always remained "little Allie" to her parents. Her cheeks glowed, too, as he looked from them to the approaching craft. He stooped and kissed her forehead. It was only an accustomed caress. He did not dream that his words were prophetic. Full of his own thoughts and fatigued by his long talk with Kishu, he gathered up his papers and went to his room. The yacht was hidden from view as she approached her moorings. Mrs. Merton sat still, dreaming contentedly. She knew her fate was approaching, but would not run to meet it. She heard a step on the piazza; felt an approaching presence.

"Letty!"

"Murvale!"

She rose and gave him her hand. The opal gleamed with rosy light as he lifted it to his lips.

THE END.

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